United Nations S/PV.7674

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7674th meeting

Tuesday, 19 April 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Liu Jieyi	(China)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Somalia to participate in this meeting.

I request that the Protocol Officer escort His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): On behalf to the Council, I welcome His Excellency President Mahmud.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; and Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Keating.

Mr. Keating: It is an honour to be here with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of the Federal Republic of Somalia. Allow me to begin by acknowledging the unfailing cooperation and friendship that he has extended to me and to recognize his leadership role at this pivotal moment in Somalia's history.

The last time I addressed the Security Council (see S/PV.7614) I had only been on the job for a few days. I said then that success in 2016 would depend upon seizing opportunities that political progress could bring about. Over the past several weeks, the President and leaders of Somalia have done just that, and progress, though not irreversible, is being made.

Last week Somalia leaders from all Federal member states and iterim regional administrations reached agreement on the electoral model to be used later this year. That significant achievement paves the way for practical planning. I commend the statesmanship shown by the National Leadership Forum, and I welcome the Federal Government's engagement of Puntland to address its concerns in the agreement signed in Garowe on 3 April, which cleared the way forward. The electoral process envisaged for 2016 will be significantly different to that of 2012. The electoral college will be 100 times larger. There will be a genuine choice of candidates. Voting will take place not just in Mogadishu, but in each of the capitals, or seats of Government, of the existing and emerging Federal member states. A two-tier structure made up of Federal and state-level representatives will implement the process. And 30 per cent of the seats in Parliament are being reserved for women.

Much remains to be done in a very short period. For example, the admirable commitment to reserve 30 per cent of parliamentary seats for women necessitates the identification of specific seats, in a balanced manner, to be contested exclusively by women. Achieving that commitment in practice will not be easy in a clan-based model, but it could mark a major milestone in making women's political empowerment and leadership a reality. Once the Cabinet has formalized the National Leadership Forum decision, it will go to the Federal Parliament. We call upon Parliament to expedite its endorsement of the model to allow for timely implementation. And I welcome the continued commitment by Somali leaders, in line with the Council's expectations that there will be no extension of constitutionally mandated term limits.

The 2016 electoral model will be unique, a one-off. It is in every sense a midway point between the elections of 2012, when just 135 electors selected 275 members of Parliament, and 2020, when all Somalis will have a say. Work is now under way to that end. Somali leaders have agreed to adopt a political road map for the period 2016 to 2020, including civil voter registration, boundary demarcation, the strengthening of independent electoral bodies and the preparation of the relevant legislation, including that relating to political parties.

There are many outstanding issues. The state-formation process in Hiraan and Middle Shabelle has encountered difficulties and delays. The international community is eager to support an inclusive agreement reached among clan leaders in both regions. We hope that the formation of the next state administration will take place soon and will set the stage for agreeing on the status of the Federal capital.

The breakthrough in the electoral process is generating broader momentum. The technical review of Somalia's provisional Federal Constitution has advanced. The first reading of constitutional amendments in Parliament took place in February. Regional consultations are now under way. Politically contentious issues are scheduled to be discussed at the next Leadership Forum meeting, to be held in May. That discussion will immediately precede a 10-day National Constitutional Conference, to be held in Garoowe, Puntland.

That activity amounts to a historic opportunity for all Somalis to contribute to shaping the political and legal foundations of their country. Some major issues may be addressed only after the electoral process, but there already have been significant developments. The rule of law and its centrepiece, the Federal Constitution, will be the strongest guarantees of long-term stability and democracy in Somalia.

The fact that progress has been taking place amid great insecurity is another reason that such progress could be reversible. Too many civilians and too many soldiers are dying. Al-Shabaab remains a potent threat. An Al-Shabaab incursion into the coastal area of Puntland in mid-March highlighted the vulnerability of the north. It also beamed a spotlight on the recruitment practices and abuse of children by Al-Shabaab, which is beyond appalling. The attack was contained thanks to the swift actions of Puntland's forces and the support of the Federal Government.

Although facing significant casualties, Al-Shabaab continues to carry out repeated asymmetric and conventional attacks. They will try to disrupt an electoral process that they correctly view as threatening their agenda. I pay tribute to the bravery of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and its troops and to the courage of the Somali security forces and the Somali people in confronting Al-Shabaab. They need and deserve our continued support. The trilateral partnership of the Federal Government, the African Union and the United Nations remains a cornerstone of the peacebuilding and State-building endeavour in Somalia.

I am encouraged by the commitments made by the AMISOM troop-contributing countries when they met in Djibouti in February. There is a recognition that command-and-control arrangements and force headquarters must be strengthened, including by placing critical enablers under the Force Commander's tasking authority. I hope that a new Force Commander will be in place soon. I have just come from Addis Ababa, where the first meeting of the African Union-United Nations Joint Task Force on strengthening AMISOM was held. It will advance our combined efforts to meet the shortfall in AMISOM funding, to strengthen its capacity and to secure the electoral process.

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union and I have identified common strategic objectives, in line with resolution 2245 (2015). Compacts between me and the Head of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), as well as between the Head of UNSOS and the Special Representative, are being finalized for the delivery of support to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and to AMISOM, respectively. We are committed to implementing the human rights due diligence policy, to promoting respect for broader human rights and to following up on allegations and ensuring accountability. The capacity of UNSOS itself is being strengthened, including through the deployment of a team of United Kingdom military experts beginning this month.

The Federal President is committed to strengthening Somali security capabilities. I applaud him for that. It is a complex and sensitive issue, but absolutely fundamental to State-building and to consolidating progress. I am therefore pleased that the Federal Government has developed a national threat assessment and national security policy. Those have been shared with the regional authorities within the country. Hopefully, recommendations will be agreed upon at the next National Leadership Forum, to be held in May. Detailed work will still have to be done on financially sustainable plans for the military, police and justice and corrections systems.

Political subscription to a national security architecture must be complemented by police, justice and corrections models that are appropriate for Somalia's unique circumstances and its Federal future. I am delighted to report that a new policing model emerged last month from consultations among the Federal Government and regional states and administrations. It includes roles and responsibilities at both the Federal and state levels and accountability to civilian authorities.

I share the President's concerns about the inconsistent payment of salaries to security-sector personnel. Last month, international security partners met with the President and the Minister of Finance to discuss the coordination of salaries and stipends. Timely and regular pay by electronic means and the transfer to a unified biometric registration system is the way forward. There is also scope for greater coherence on the part of international partners to support the Somali security sector on the basis of the security architecture and plans currently under discussion.

Somalia's economy is dependant upon favourable weather and the entrepreneurship of its people, including in the diaspora. Building greater trust and identifying the mutual benefits to be derived from stronger relationships between the State and businesses could yield enormous benefits, including the strengthening of institutions that can deliver greater security, financial accountability, a favourable macroeconomic and regulatory environment and basic services, such as energy, education and vocational training. Those are in the interests both of businesses and of young Somalis, most of whom lack job prospects.

Somalia continues to make progress in economic management. An anti-money-laundering bill was signed into law in February. Empty seats on the Central Bank Board have been filled. While there is still a long way to go, including tackling corruption and reducing financial leakage, the current direction is encouraging. Recognizing that situation, last week the International Monetary Fund announced its intention to propose a staff-monitored programme, intended to help Somalia to establish the track record required to begin the process of debt relief, and eventually eligibility for concessional lending from international financial institutions.

The Federal Government is central to moving that agenda forward. Success would yield benefits for all parts of the country, helping to attract both public and private investment in areas that will boost Somalia's competitiveness and ability to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. We are grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General for calling upon Somalia's external creditors to accelerate preparations for in-depth discussions on eligibility, as outlined at the Spring Meetings Somalia Roundtable of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group, held in Washington, D.C., last week.

Somalia's security and prosperity depend upon success in reversing dependency upon aid and in addressing the root causes of fragility, conflict and violent extremism. A comprehensive political strategy is required that embraces economic investment in the drivers of growth, job creation and education, including for girls and women; and in the rule of law, respect for human rights, and capable security and counter-terrorism forces. It is a formidable agenda and requires commitment both by Somalia's political and traditional leaders, as well as concerted support from its neighbours and international partners. It also requires addressing short-term realities. One of those is drought, now affecting Somaliland and Puntland. Droughts in 2011 triggered a famine that resulted in the deaths of some 260,000 people. That must not happen again.

On top of acute food insecurity, continuing drought could have a negative impact on broader security — strengthening Islamist jihadists currently on the back foot in those areas — and increase displacement and migrant flows. Timely and appropriate action now will mitigate the possibility of another catastrophe. The resources needed to tackle the problem are immeasurably less than the costs later — whether measured in money or, more important, lives. Somali authorities have established national and regional drought committees to raise funds and coordinate the response, but that is not enough. Humanitarian organizations have received only $145 million of the $885 million callled for in the consolidated appeal for 2016. On 31 March, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Peter de Clercq, launched a call for aid seeking $105 million to step up drought response. Donors are responding, for which we are grateful, but so much more is needed.

The challenges faced by Somalis are formidable. The progress is real, but reversible. The state-formation and electoral processes remain vulnerable to spoilers. AMISOM needs more support and cannot stay forever. We must therefore do our best to make sure that the progress is not reversed, to get the electoral process for 2016 completed and the elections in 2020 prepared; to build the national capacity of the Somalis to take over from AMISOM; and to generate the jobs and revenues for a sustainable State.

Our — and my — efforts to do that depend in large part upon the unity of the Council, for which I must thank members. It also depends upon the coherence of the broader international community, not only the African Union but also the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the European Union and Somalia's principal bilateral partners.

I look forward to the visit of the Security Council next month and to joining the leaders of Somalia to ensure a brighter future for all Somalis.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Keating for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. António.

Mr. António: Let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, and congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and for giving us this opportunity to address the Council on the situation in Somalia. This is an opportunity to exchange views on the recent political and security situation. As the African Union (AU), we would also like to focus on an update on the operations of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

I would like to thank Mr. Keating for his very insightful briefing, as well as for his cooperation on the ground. I would also especially like to welcome His Excellency the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia to the Council.

Since the last briefing by the African Union (see S/PV.7614), Somalia seems firmly set on the path to polls later this year. I am happy to note that the dynamic and proactive relationship that has developed among Somalia's Federal and regional leaders in the context of the National Leadership Forum is allowing for the enhancement of synergies, mutual accommodation, collaboration and the consolidation of a common vision for Somalia.

Earlier this month, with limited intervention by international partners, Somali leaders met and signed off on the practical details of the 2016 electoral model, as stated by Mr. Keating. They unanimously adopted a joint declaration spelling out the general principles and guidelines for the implementation of the electoral model they agreed upon during the January meeting of the National Leadership Forum. In that respect, the AU looks forward to the conduct of elections in Somalia by August 2016, based on that consensual model.

That is a step in the desired direction, and collaboration, mutual tolerance and readiness will continue to define the success of the electoral process and other political aspects in Somalia in accordance with Vision 2016. As much as it is still below the desired threshold of the one person/one vote model, we commend the introduction of electoral colleges for the 2016 elections, which will be significantly larger than the small number of elders who chose the leaders of the current central Government and members of the Federal Parliament four years ago. With the present electoral model, the 2016 process is anticipated to be more inclusive and representative. We remain ready to support the Government and the people of Somalia in that endeavour.

While we welcome those developments, we also urge the timely nomination of the other electoral organs and the completion by the technical committee of the election implementation plan, including its subsequent ratification by the Federal Parliament. Somalia now has three emergent states members of the federation, each with an elected leader presiding over a cabinet of ministers and an elected assembly. We urge the Federal Government to continue to push for the timely conclusion of the process for the establishment of the final state of the federation, which will bring together the two regions of Hiraan and Middle Shabelle. The empowerment and consolidation of those regional administrations will bring the Government closer to the people and make the provision of essential services — including security, law and order, justice, the sinking of boreholes and the building of schools, hospitals and roads — much more possible.

In the fulfilment of their mandate, AMISOM forces have registered significant gains in Somalia. The ousting of Al-Shabaab from Mogadishu and the liberation of a large number of district capitals and swathes of territory previously under Al-Shabaab control have significantly contributed to the creation of levels of stability that allowed for a viable political process to unfold and governance to take place in the country. The ongoing Operation Juba Corridor, coupled with the recent recovery of more territory and towns and the air strikes by AMISOM partners, have contributed to degrading Al-Shabaab capabilities and eliminating several of its top leaders.

Despite those gains, the security situation in Somalia remains fluid. Al-Shaabab has shown resilience and the capacity to adapt. It still retains considerable initiative and capacity to gather intelligence and deploy small, but highly mobile and effective, teams of fighters who use suicide bombers, grenades and artillery to attack, impede the movement of people and goods, slow down AMISOM activities in the main supply routes, carry out ambushes and mount complex attacks through a combined and concomitant use of all those types of weapons.

In the light of those challenges, the AU has taken several steps to ensure that AMISOM operational efficiency is enhanced. The AU convened a summit of troop and police-contributing countries on 28 February, hosted by the Government of Djibouti, to address some of the immediate challenges confronting AMISOM operations, especially in relation to resources, command and control and the generation of additional enablers and support to the Somali national security forces. The Heads of State and the troop and police-contributing countries took important decisions and made far-reaching commitments on those aspects and signed the Djibouti Declaration on AMISOM, which set the foundations for the consolidation of AMISOM's mission of stabilizing Somalia.

The African Union and the United Nations have also formally established the joint working group meeting, which was formally launched in Addis Ababa on 15 April. The working group is an outcome of the meeting of the United Nations-African Union Joint Task Force on Peace and Security convened in New York on 22 March. It is expected to strengthen AMISOM's operational effectiveness. The working group is currently meeting in Addis Ababa to discuss concrete ways to enhance AMISOM's command and control, including the possibility of a multinational sector headquarters in AMISOM's area of operations, as well as to enhance the capacity of the AMISOM force and Mission headquarters. The working group will formally submitt its technical recommendations in due course.

AMISOM's priorities in the third and fourth quarters of the year are to continue to conduct defensive, offensive and routine operations in the areas of its responsibility in Somalia; patrol main supply routes; escort convoys; and to protect airports, ports, other critical infrastructure, sensitive sites and very important persons. The conduct of surprise attacks and cordon-and-search operations to disrupt enemy plans and degrade, weaken and destroy its capabilities, and reduce and eliminate its presence in towns, villages and remote areas are an essential part of AMISOM's modus operandi. That will reduce Al-Shabaab's ability to carry out ambushes and grenade attacks against AMISOM and the Somali national security forces or to place improvised explosive devices along the main supply routes. Moreover, that will ensure that Al-Shabaab does not succeed in its attempts to disrupt the upcoming elections in Somalia later this year, and will make it possible for the elections to take place in an enabling, safe and secure environment. To that effect, the Federal Government of Somalia and AMISOM have set up a joint committee that has already started to operate. That will require the enhancement of the effectiveness of AMISOM and the Somali security forces.

At this juncture, I would like to reiterate four critical issues that require the Council's attention in our collective efforts to enhance AMISOM operations.

First, there is a clear justification for the renewal of AMISOM's mandate in the light of the progress made in the creation of a conducive environment in the political process, but also the continued security challenges encountered in Somalia. It is important, as recommended during the summit of the Heads of State and Government of the troop- and police-contributing countries of AMISOM, that the mandate be renewed and the current authorized AMISOM force of 22,126 uniformed personnel and 70 civilians be supported. Those are the minimum essential requirements for the conduct of renewed AMISOM offensive operations in Somalia. The AU Peace and Security Council will consider the situation in Somalia on 28 April in Addis Ababa, with a view to recommending that the Security Council authorize the renewal of AMISOM's mandate.

Secondly, AMISOM's strategy needs to be adapted to effectively cope with the ongoing and evolving security challenges. AMISOM strategy must embrace more targeted operations involving holding, offensive and pursuit operations. That approach will complement the territorial offensive operation aimed at recovering territories from Al-Shaabab by undertaking more deliberate intelligence-driven operations to further degrade the capabilities of that terrorist group. The African Union Commission has directed the AMISOM leadership to commence planning for this new strategy and would welcome the Council's support for its execution.

Thirdly, the mobilization of resources to ensure that the salaries of the Somali security forces are paid in a regular and timely manner and the identification of funds to fill the gap created by the 20 per cent salary cut for AMISOM uniformed personnel are important to raising their morale and keeping them motivated. The support and capacitation of the Somali National Army remains a central priority in terms of both lethal and non-lethal provisions, within a coordinated framework, in order to facilitate the take-over of primary security responsibilities by the respective Somali institutions. Significant achievements are already being registered.

Fourthly, the deployment of operational enablers and force multipliers are pivotal for the rejuvenation of AMISOM operations. I welcome the pledges of helicopters made by Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The deployment of those helicopters will ensure that AMISOM can conduct targeted operations as well as achieve greater flexibility and protection. In that respect, I would like to urge the Council to facilitate the finalization of letters of assist, bearing in mind that reimbursement for the helicopters should be at a level commensurate with the offensive nature of AMISOM operations in Somalia.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the troop- and police-contributing countries, whose men and women are making immense sacrifices. We would also like to thank our partners for providing support, including financial as well as in-kind contributions, in order to assist AMISOM and the forces of the Federal Government of Somalia in their efforts to stabilize Somalia and to create an enabling space for governance, the distribution of humanitarian assistance and the building of infrastructure for economic and social development to take place.

The President: I now call on the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

President Mohamud: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council. It is an honour to do so.

A tragedy has been unfolding in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, one that many believe concerns people from my country and neighbouring countries. If all the reports are confirmed, it could be the worst tragedy since the current migration crisis began. We must make every effort to recover the bodies of those who perished and to care for those who survived. I applaud the efforts made by many nations to safeguard and care for migrants and refugees escaping their home nations because of the misfortune of insecurity and hopelessness.

We request that the Governments in the region, and others that have the capacity to do so, investigate the crimes that have been committed by those who lure young people to undertake unsafe journeys on the high seas. The pain, misery and misfortune of all illegal migration and its painful physical and mental costs for all concerned will end only when we have peace, stability and real inclusive economic development in source countries.

Let me begin by thanking the Council for its long-standing support for peace, stability and development in Somalia.

It has been almost four years since my Government was appointed and since Somalia emerged from two decades of war — two decades without a functioning Government in place, and without schools, hospitals or any form of public services. In Brussels in late 2013, I made a pledge on behalf of Somalia to pursue peace and prosperity. That pledge had been central to my original six-pillar policy, which provided a foundation for the subsequent New Deal Compact for Somalia. At the heart of my Brussels pledge lay the pursuit of three imperative elements, namely, a secure Somalia, a democratic Somalia and a progressive and prosperous Somalia.

In 2013, the Somali Government agreed to pursue the political transformation of the nation by drafting and agreeing on a federal constitution, adopting a federal model of governance and holding democratic nationwide elections by September 2016. We laid out that ambitious agenda knowing that we faced the enormous challenge of trying to transform Somalia politically while fighting a war against terror on our own soil and lacking robust capacities or instruments of State. When we first laid out those historic plans, Somalia had limited functioning ministries and human resources, limited domestic revenue streams to speak of and no domestic planning or management capacity to drive forward and sustain the desired reforms in the country.

Along with the necessary political transformation, we needed to build a secure Somalia. Our national armed forces were decimated. Our soldiers, police and security personnel lacked formal training, capacity-building or salaries for almost 22 years. Al-Shabaab had emerged from the conflict, taking advantage of non-existent State institutions, and began its campaign of terror in Somalia and neighbouring countries. Security must provide the conditions for development to flourish, and Somalia needed development desperately. We had lost two generations of people who had not even been able to go to school. There were no jobs, no public services and very little hope among our young people, who make up the majority of our population.

Somalia has lived a lifetime over the past four years. Our transformation has been rapid. Despite all of the challenges, Somalia has made extraordinary progress, of which we are proud and which ought to make our partners proud too. With the end of the constitutionally mandated terms of the Federal Government and Parliament, the latter half of 2016 will be a decisive time for Somalia. Last week, we successfully agreed the implementation road map for the 2016 electoral process. That means that we are on track to undergo the historic first democratic electoral process in 47 years in Somalia. I will not go into all the details of the 2016 election. However, let me draw attention to several important facts.

First, the process will be uniform throughout Somalia to ensure national legitimacy. Secondly, a dispute-resolution process will support the elections to ensure that we are able to respond to any concerns and immediately address them to avoid conflicts. Thirdly, a lower- and an upper-house will be elected. Fourthly, 30 per cent of the seats in the electoral process and emerging ninth Parliament's Federal members will be identified and specifically reserved for women. In 2012, when my Government was elected, just 135 elders were involved in the selection of our members of Parliament. In 2016, while elders will still play a pivotal role, an electoral college of almost 14,000 people will ultimately make the decision about who will represent the nation. That is great progress.

We are committed to ensuring that there are no impediments to the timely implementation of the electoral process, including with regard to the freedom of expression, or any extension of the constitutionally mandated term limits of the legislature and executive. This year's electoral process takes us one step closer to universal suffrage. We recognize the importance of a clear political vision and path and have engaged in twin-track planning in support of one-person/one-vote elections, supported by a capable national independent electoral commission in 2020. Somalia's Federal Constitution sets out the foundation for peaceful politics in Somalia. We are pushing ahead to complete the review of priority chapters of the Provisional Federal Constitution by the end of 2016.

Nationwide consultations with Somalis in all Federal and emerging member states will be essential to ensuring broad-based consensus and ownership. Our Government is genuinely committed to that and strongly believes in its value. During the past three years, we successfully established three out of the four Federal member states. We are working hard to complete the state-formation process in Hiraan and Middle Shabelle and to reach agreement on clarifying the status of the region of Benadir, the capital city of Somalia.

While substantial progress has been made on the security front, with almost 80 per cent of the country liberated from Al-Shabaab, we acknowledge, with great sadness and frustration, that the security environment at present is an inhibiting factor for the development of both the Government institutions and the people of Somalia. Furthermore, the current security environment remains a root cause for the significant humanitarian situation and the ongoing assistance requirements in Somalia.

I wish to recognize and commend the valiant efforts of the Somali national security forces and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in the fight against Al-Shabaab. That fight is not over. We cannot, and will not, quit before it is successfully completed. Further resources and commitment are needed now more than ever to chop off the head of the venomous snake of terror once and for all. We strongly reiterate the need for international support for reinvigorated AMISOM and Somali National Army (SNA) operations. The February Djibouti Declaration was unequivocal in that partners must continue to provide sustainable funding for both AMISOM and the SNA forces to fulfil their mandates. The Declaration was also clear on the urgent need for a structural overhaul of how AMISOM is commanded. We must be confident that a central command structure will be put in place to support a coordinated and successful offensive in the near future.

My Government has been working hard to strengthen the capacity and accountability of Somali security institutions throughout the country so that we are ready to assume control of our own security and release AMISOM from its current commitment. We are in the process of developing financially sustainable plans for the army — the Gulwaade plan — and the police — the Heegan plan — under a national security architecture, which is informed by the public expenditure review conducted by the World Bank and the United Nations. Articulating and agreeing on the

State structures that will oversee the development of our security services has been the focus of my Government over the past several months. I am very pleased that the draft national security policy, endorsed by the National Security Council, is scheduled to be discussed through consultative meetings in each regional member state capital. The first meeting will commence next week, with a culminating national forum scheduled for mid-May. That includes a reinvigoration of the National Security Council to include regional representation at the highest level of decision-making. The national threat assessment has been completed, and the national security architecture planning is under way. Its completion is predicated on the completion of the national security policy that outlines guiding principles on Federal and regional security-related institutions' roles and missions.

International support to the Somali security sector is essential. My Government has taken steps to ensure increased transparency in security sector reform, including enhanced monitoring systems, the registration of all personnel and their regular payment. We are pushing ahead with national force integration. The National Commission for Somali National Army Integration has integrated four SNA battalions in the Jubbaland region and one headquarters company of female soldiers. I am pleased to report elements of the newly integrated battalions have conducted joint operations with Danab forces in coordination with the AMISOM and other international partners. Two more battalions are in the pipeline for integration by July in Jubbaland and, thanks to the recently approved United Nations support package to Puntland, the National Commission for Somali National Army Integration is scheduled to start a process for the integration of 3,000 Puntland soldiers within the next month.

However, we cannot ignore the one element that would have the most rapid and greatest impact on the development of Somalia's own forces, that is, the lifting of the United Nations arms embargo. We have made solid improvements in weapons and ammunition management and compliance with notification, reporting and controls. In the past six months, we marked more than 4,500 weapons, established a weapon and ammunition technical working group and agreed upon the terms of reference for the joint verification team. We have held consultative meetings to initiate the drafting of a road map to develop a comprehensive national framework governing the full life cycle of weapons and ammunition, and we have made significant improvements in complying with Security Council arms notification requirements.

Despite that improvement and the calls of the different Security Council resolutions to our international partners to provide non-lethal weapons to Somalia, we are still hindered by the partial embargo. We therefore request members of the Security Council for the total lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia. That will enhance our national capabilities to confront and defeat international terrorism at home and provide the best protection for our citizens, while safeguarding our democratic and developmental future against violent and radicalized spoilers. The arms embargo, and indeed the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group, was put in place for good reasons and in the interests of Somalia — and we are very grateful for that — but Somalia has changed dramatically. Those instruments are outdated and restrictive at best, and misleading and undermining at worst

Today the threat in Somalia is not so much due to a lack of institutional capacity or oversight mechanisms, but to terrorism and violent extremism. Let us focus on mechanisms that deal effectively with the disastrous, international phenomenon that is terrorism. If Somalia is to successfully defeat Al-Shabaab once and for all and effectively rebuild an inclusive nation, then the Security Council must support its efforts through all possible means. We therefore request once again the complete lifting of the arms embargo and a review of the mandate of the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group. Such a review should take place in the light of the regenerated political, security, economic and financial progress made by my Government towards the peace and stability of Somalia. The outcome of the review should reflect the understanding that Somalia is no longer at war with itself, but that Somalis are fighting alongside all concerned Member States to make our world a safer place for all.

Somalia's progress is illustrated clearly in the area of public financial management reform. Today, Somalia has a working Central Bank, overseen by a functioning Board of Directors. The offices of the Accountant-General and the independent Auditor-General are functioning. Furthermore, the internationally recognized Financial Governance Committee of Somalia is in place, which reports regularly and publicly and includes representatives of members from the international financial institutions, including the

World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank.

In parallel to robust governance and oversight progress, the public financial management legislative environment is also being developed. The Federal Parliament recently ratified three important bills, namley, the Public Procurement, Concession and Disposal Bill, the Anti-Money-Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism Bill and the Audit Bill. And the Cabinet has approved the Public Finance Management Bill.

I draw the Council's attention to the significance of Somalia's first article IV consultation by the International Monetary Fund in 25 years. The consultation confirmed Somalia's 2015 economic growth of 3.7 per cent. That is clear evidence that Somalia is on an aggressive path towards reform, and we are very grateful for the support that our international partners have provided over the years. Somalia has agreed with the International Monetary Fund to a reform programme for the period from May 2016 to April 2017, which focuses on implementing prudent fiscal policies while strengthening institutional capacity for macroeconomic financial management. The programme will enhance governance and economic statistical capacity, strengthen fiscal discipline, rebuild capacity for monetary policy management and foster financial sector development as a basis for supporting economic growth. It will be a key step in the process liquidating the arrears and the normalization of relations with international financial institutions as a whole.

Those achievements clearly demonstrate that the Federal Government has developed both the capacity and the proper oversight mechanisms to handle public finances responsibly, transparently and in accordance with international best practices.In addition, last February, I launched the Open Government initiative to ensure that information relevant to Government activities was made available to the public in order to promote transparency, accountability and participation.

Of course, systems are not the only thing that Somalia needs. I draw the Council's attention to the urgent need to develop key economic sectors that will provide all Somalis with greater opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. I welcome the international community's efforts to expand support for high priority economic sectors and youth employment, including through vocational training and skills development. Generating support for regional economic initiatives, especially for infrastructure development, will be essential for regional economic growth and cooperation.

I cannot urge strongly enough the need for a comprehensive approach to equipping Somali youth with tools that will enable them to play a positive role in bringing peace, social progress and economic prosperity to Somalia. In that regard, in line with resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security, we welcome the development of a national youth policy and the United Nations Strategy for Youth in Somalia.

The year 2016 marks the final year of the Somali Compact established in Brussels in 2013. The Compact has played a crucial role in improving the partnership, with mutual accountability between the Government and the international community, and in furthering the political, security and development progress in Somalia. We look forward to developing that next phase of international engagement in Somalia, based on a shared set of principles and a renewal of the joint partnerships within Somalia and with its partners. Work is now progressing on a three-year national development plan, which will include political and security elements so that the holistic approach forged through the Somali Compact is not lost. The principles that guide the partnership between the Government and the international community after the Compact ends will be developed and agreed upon in the corning months.

Programmes and resources must be further aligned to Somalia's national priorities. In particular, concrete steps must be taken to deliver more assistance through country systems, in response to improvements in the Government's budget, expenditures and financial governance systems. I am proud to say that Somalia is a beautiful country with great economic opportunity, both at sea and on land. Our newly adopted foreign policy has investment at its heart, and in the past few years our Government has been working to create an environment conducive to investment in all our key priority sectors.

Tackling terrorism, rebuilding an inclusive State and playing a meaningful role in our region and the wider world requires sustainable development, which I am certain we can nurture and sustain with the wealth of our nation. While we are grateful for the aid that our partners have provided, and continue to provide, to us, we strongly encourage them and their entrepreneurs to invest in Somalia for the social and economic benefit of both themselves and the Somali people. Indeed, with the wealth of our resources, Somalia is truly a place where investment will most certainly meet with great profitable opportunities.

In conclusion, let me once again thank the Council for its unwavering support for Somalia. The strength of the Council members' commitment, combined with our people and the Government's support and partnership on the ground, has today brought forward a Somalia at one, a Somalia at peace with itself and focused on the collective achievement of national stability, progress and prosperity. Somalia has turned the corner, and there is absolutely no turning back to the dark past. It is my most earnest desire that what is discussed here and the decisions taken will be in the best interests of a united Somalia, once again one Somalia — a sovereign, secure, democratic and Federal Somalia at peace with itself and the world, for the benefit of its people.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my gratitude and that of the Somali people for the engagement of our international partners, including the AMISOM troops on the ground, with the support provided to them by partners. Today, Somalia is holding elections after 47 years. The last election that took place in Somalia was in 1969. The people who participated in that election are today retired, at best. A new nation is experiencing a new, good beginning.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I would like to thank all our briefers this morning. Let me take this chance to commend President Mohamud for his leadership. Under his guidance, we have witnessed progress in Somalia that was once thought impossible. He has spearheaded Somalia's return to the international community. As he just stated, Somalia has turned the corner and there is no turning back. I join others in welcoming him to the Security Council. I also warmly welcome Special Representative Keating on his first address in the Chamber in his new role.

Tomorrow will mark the first anniversary of the Al-Shabaab attack against the United Nations compound in Puntland. Six people were killed that day; four were UNICEF staff. Their lives were cruelly cut short because they dared to help to build a better Somalia, one of peace, one free from polio, one where all children could receive an education. As we mourn and remember our colleagues and all the victims of terrorism in Somalia, let us reaffirm our commitment today to the future that they dared to build.

Since Prime Minister Cameron hosted the London Conference on Somalia in 2012, the British commitment has involved the reopening of our Embassy, an increase in our development assistance and now the deployment of personnel to the United Nations. That commitment will only be strengthen in the years ahead. Such commitments have never been more vital. This is a crucial year for Somalia's future prosperity and stability. For me, it comes down to three things, namely, elections, security and partnership.

First, the election process in August will be a landmark moment in Somalia's political development. The electoral process needs to be transparent, to deliver on time and to be inclusive. Such an electoral process will cement Somalia's positive trajectory to democracy. There can be no place at the table for any group or individual who seeks to deliberately undermine the process. I welcome the decision on an electoral process and the recent agreement on an implementation plan by the National Leaders Forum. It is important now to translate that into action. The United Nations and the international community stand ready to support the process, and in doing so we commit to help Somalia to reach that most vital of goals, that is, one-person/one-vote elections in 2020.

But no country can develop successfully if it leaves half its population behind, and we therefore welcome the commitment to reserve 30 per cent of the seats in both Houses for women. That is not a women's issue; it is a peace issue. Engaging women at all levels of decision-making is absolutely crucial to development and stability.

The second top issue is security. One of the most sacred responsibilities of any State is to protect its citizens. We have seen the Federal Government in Somalia take welcome steps towards that goal in its high-level partnership commitments on security sector reform and the agreement to a national security policy with the interim regional administrations. I urge the Government to continue those efforts. For them to succeed, security sector reform and the development of the Somali National Army and police force need to be fully coordinated with donors. They also need to be *accountable and transparent*.

In the meantime, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) of course remains a critical enabler to progress. I would like to commend the bravery of the AMISOM men and women and to offer my condolences for the losses suffered by troop-contributing countries. History will show the immense contribution made by AMISOM to peace in Somalia. The commitments at the recent summit in Djibouti to an early resumption of offensive operations against Al-Shabaab is very welcome. Better coordination and command and control will be essential to success. The United Kingdom stands ready to assist where we can, and that is why we are deploying British military personnel to the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, some of whom have just arrived in Somalia.

My final point concerns partnership. The year 2016 is the final one for the current Somali Compact. The Compact has provided a crucial framework for partnership between the international community and Somalia. We now need to build on that and to agree on a compact type of agreement for 2017 and beyond, which should strengthen the links between Somalia's political, security and development tracks and reaffirm the principles and shared values that bind us together. A central element of the agreement will be the Somalia national development plan, and we welcome the progress made in developing it.

As Somalia works towards these three priorities — elections, security, partnership — the commitments of the international community, including the Security Council, remain essential. But as my Deputy saw first-hand when he visited Mogadishu last week, it is clear that any international commitment will be met with equal if not more dedication by the people living and working in Somalia. Whether they are representatives of the Federal Government, civil society or AMISOM, they all continue to serve bravely with an undiminished commitment to a stable, secure and prosperous Somalia.

When the history books are written, let them say that 2016 was a truly decisive year, a year when Somali's fragile gains were consolidated and strengthened by the most representative and democratic electoral process in a generation. In achieving that goal, President Mohamud, you will have the resolute support of the Security Council.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important meeting. I would like to welcome Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia; Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia.

This year is of utmost importance for Somalia, as we expect elections to be held at the end of August, leading, for only the second time in 27 years, to a peaceful transition of power in that brotherly country. In this regard, my delegation commends the efforts made by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and his Government to overcome all obstacles and continuously work to reach out to all Somalis. This has led to a comprehensive, integrated Somali-owned political process that is supported by all international and regional Powers.

We welcome the efforts made by all Somalis, particularly the leaders of the various federal regions through the Somali Leaders Forum held at the beginning of this month, and the agreement reached on all items related to the electoral process. My delegation stresses its support for Somali national efforts in this regard. We emphasize that the electoral process must be completed within the set time frame and involve the largest possible number of Somalis, including women and young people. We call on the international community to ensure that the funding necessary for the electoral process and its security is in place.

Progress made on the political front would not have been possible without progress on the security front. This is allowed political leaders to work in freedom as the strength of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab has declined. Thanks to the successful security operations led by both African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army, members of Al-Shabaab have been expelled from more than 90 Somali cities. Their military capabilities have been degraded to the lowest level in years. We commend AMISOM and the Somali National Army for the sacrifices they have made in recent times.

My delegation stresses the need for the international community to ensure that predictable and secure material support is provided to AMISOM forces. This support is needed; the international community must not abandon its commitment to the Mission. We call on Member States to support the Somali Government's efforts to retrain and rehabilitate its army and redraft the national security strategy. Somali forces must be appropriately armed in order to prosecute the necessary military operations against Al-Shabaab. That would ensure durable peace and security and allow for the withdrawal of AMISOM at the appropriate time.

These achievements must be protected by taking practical steps to ensure peace and security for the Somali people. We must work to coordinate international efforts in support of the Somali Government and the federal regions and provide essential services to areas liberated from Al-Shabaab. This would be the best proof of the international community's support for economic revitalization in Somalia. We must also coordinate humanitarian efforts, particularly in the health sector, especially when it comes to maternal and child health. Further, support for the rule of law must be provided in those regions.

Accordingly, my delegation renews its call for support for the friendly Somali people, which was stressed during the visit to Somalia earlier this month by the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which he underscored the need to support the health and education sectors, training of Somali medical cadres, the rebuilding of the Somali military hospital, the return of the Egyptian educational mission to Mogadishu to set up two schools there, the training of cadres in the field of agriculture, and reviewing the possibility of setting up tripartite cooperation to train military cadres, including the Coast Guard, in Somalia.

In Egypt, a study has been undertaken to provide technical help to the Somali Parliament. Training is being considered for the fields of investment, contract drafting and natural-resource protection. We shall act to coordinate Arab humanitarian and medical efforts in order to meet the needs of the country. We also welcome the Secretary-General's efforts in cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions in support of economic growth in Somalia and the reduction of poverty.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need to coordinate international efforts in support of Somalia in order to derive the greatest possible value from such efforts. We stress our commitment to providing support to the Somali people and Government in deed, and not just in word, and to coordinating all efforts — bilateral, regional and international — in this regard.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I welcome President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to New York and thank him for being here. We appreciate the important work he is doing, his optimism about Somalia's future and the clear portrait he has painted of the opportunities and the challenges his nation faces at this pivotal moment. I would also like to thank Special Representative Keating for his briefing and for his efforts to galvanize and ensure the coherence of the international effort in Somalia.

I also thank Ambassador António for his briefing; certainly the strong partnership between the African Union and the United Nations has been one of the keys to the successes we have achieved to date, and this partnership will be critical as we move forward. To this end, at our next discussion on Somalia, we would welcome the chance to hear from Special Representative Madeira, whose insights into the situation in Somalia could be useful for us to consider as we approach the mandate renewal for the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) next month.

One thing is certain — the Somali people are fighting for the future of their country. The Al-Shabaab campaign of terrorism, which has cost the lives of so many people, must only strengthen our determination to make progress in securing a peaceful and prosperous future for the Somali people. To achieve success, we need to act purposefully, quickly and collectively in order to help the Somali people build strong institutions of democratic governance and rule of law, to continue taking the fight to Al-Shabaab and to help the nearly 5 million Somalis who cannot meet their basic daily needs without assistance.

It is an election year in Somalia, as the President has stated and as we all know, and the Government's tenacious work to reach an agreement on an electoral model was an important step forward. Our hope is that the Somali Parliament can finalize the implementation plan quickly and that the next steps can proceed swiftly in the spring and summer — steps such as launching voter-education programmes, vetting candidates, finalizing financing and security modalities and other efforts to help put voting structures in place. This year's vote is essential, not just in itself but because it is a critical step towards universal elections in 2020, based on one person/one vote.

Against that backdrop, the United States welcomes the progress that the Somali Government has made with the state-formation process over the past three years. For the first time in decades, the map of Somalia's Federal states is nearly complete. We encourage the

Government to continue those efforts and to finalize the formation of the Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle regions. As the election season approaches, time is of the essence, if Somalia is to ensure that those two regions can also take part in the electoral process later this year. Their transition to Federal state status is part of that.

Creating an atmosphere where inclusive politics can thrive requires security, and there major challenges persist. There is no question that, thanks principally to the efforts of the African Union and the countries of the region, acting through the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and with the support of the United Nations, security in Somalia has improved considerably. We commend the bravery of the AMISOM troops and the Somali soldiers and pay particular tribute to the willingness of Ethiopia and Kenya to continue to lead the fight against terrorism in the Horn of Africa. For its part, the United States will continue to use the tools at its disposal, financial, diplomatic, intelligence and military, to help dismantle Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups.

Both AMISOM and the Somali National Army must press the offensive against Al-Shabaab. In particular, we urge them to initiate coordinated planning aimed at recapturing the Juba River Valley. Their success will create much-needed space for political and economic development throughout the country. As part of that effort, we echo the call of President Mohamud and Mr. Francisco Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, for enhanced international support for the creation of a capable, professional and inclusive Somali National Army that respects international humanitarian law.

In order to achieve that ambitious goal, the unique partnership among AMISOM, the Somali National Army, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia requires close cooperation and coordination. That includes a number of steps, including making sure that AMISOM has the right equipment and that it is operationally sound, including through the provision of critical enablers to the Mission. That support is vital to ensuring that both AMISOM and the Somali National Army can bring further military pressure to bear on Al-Shabaab and avoid costly losses such as the harrowing ones they have suffered in recent months. What comes after an area is liberated from Al-Shabaab has a direct connection with how we, Somalia and the international community, can combat terrorism. We agree on the imperative of creating space for inclusive politics, pursuing economic recovery, reducing unemployment among young people, enhancing education and encouraging further defections from Al-Shabaab by providing a future for disengaged combatants.

Those are very difficult steps, to be sure, but they can be helped by promulgating a coordinated and comprehensive national security policy that includes the establishment of clear police, justice and corrections models for Somalia in the context of federalism. Security advances will not be sustainable and cannot take root unless respect for human rights and international humanitarian law is central and safeguarded. In connection with that, we encourage the Federal Government of Somalia to set up a human rights commission to ensure respect for the freedom of expression, make additional progress on ending the use of child soldiers and hold security forces accountable for violations, including those related to sexual exploitation and abuse. All security forces in Somalia, including the Somali National Army and AMISOM, must respect human rights.

In the face of the challenges we are confronting, the international community must do its part to support Somalia's progress by engaging in actions that empower rather than exploit the nation's economy. With that in mind, we emphasize that illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in Somalia's waters has the potential to stoke instability in an already fragile nation.

Lastly, the chronic humanitarian crisis in Somalia demands our attention. Too many people, some 40 per cent of the population, are in need of humanitarian assistance; too many, more than 1.1 million, are suffering from displacement; and too many children are malnourished. Those challenges have been exacerbated by the effects of the El Niño weather phenomenon. The United States has been at the forefront of raising international awareness about El Niño's impact in Africa, while partnering with governmental and non-governmental aid operations to prevent, mitigate and respond to emergency needs related to food, water and health. In addition to strengthening financial institutions in Somalia, the United States Government has provided more than $240 million in humanitarian aid since October 2014, supporting emergency food assistance, nutrition interventions and health-care programmes, among other forms of lifesaving assistance, and has invested in resilience programming to help bolster the ability of households and communities to weather such shocks. Together, we must do more. We urge the international community to support the humanitarian response plan for 2016.

In conclusion, while we have made truly important gains, we have a long way to go. We must maintain a sharp focus, steady coordination and a steadfast commitment to ensuring that stability takes root and that ultimately peace prevails once and for all in Somalia, for all Somalis.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the President of Somalia, His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and in general we share the views that he has expressed. We would like to thank Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, for his comprehensive briefing on the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. We are grateful to the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, Mr. Téte António, for his explanation of that pan-African organization's approaches to the settlement in Somalia.

We were pleased to see that the Somali National Forum held on 12 April confirmed the planned parameters for the general elections scheduled for August and September and the unacceptability of failing to keep to the established timetable.

The security situation, however, continues to be worrisome. We are seeing an increase in the activity of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group and trends that suggest changes in its tactics. According to international experts, the extremists have become more mobile and are focusing on carrying out their terrorist attacks where they can have the greatest international impact, coordinating their activities with various international accomplices. We have been obliged to recognize the fact that Al-Shabaab members have recently been attacking military bases as well as the so-called soft civilian targets.

In that regard, we believe that it is essential to maintain military pressure on Somali extremists, and we urge the international community to continue its efforts to increase the capacity of the Somali army and the African Union Mission in Somalia. The military-political situation in the country demands that the African Union peacekeepers and Somali security forces step up their combat efforts against Al-Shabaab and that the United Nations expand its logistical and technical support in accordance with resolution 2245 (2015), which extended the mandate of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia.

In our view, one of the Somali authorities' priorities at this stage is the process of building the State and federalization, and completing the formation of the Federal states is particularly high on that agenda. We cannot allow the remaining disagreements to have a negative impact on the country's electoral process.

On the social and humanitarian front, the continuing drought in Puntland and Somaliland, which has brought hundreds of thousands to the verge of starvation, is very worrying. We urge the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected regions in order to supply the population with drinking water, food and medicines. Russia has been regularly providing humanitarian assistance to the Federal Government of Somalia and Somali refugees in neighbouring countries through targeted contributions to the appropriate United Nations funds, with our total assistance exceeding $15 million for the period from 2011 to 2015. We share the belief that currently there is a need to not only step up international donations to resolve specific economic and social issues, but also to ensure comprehensive support to the Federal Government to provide financial and humanitarian assistance to people.

At the same time, we call for the strict implementation of the provisions of resolution 2275 (2016) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, including, inter alia, the necessary holding this year of parliamentary elections on the basis of the agreed electoral model and the Government's implementation of the road map for 2020, as well as accelerating work on the drafting of a new Constitution for the country. The most important tasks for the Government now are to strengthen the security sector, bolster the foundations of federalism and advance sustainable national and inter-ethnic reconciliation in Somalia.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to commend you, Mr. President, for convening today's informative meeting. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Mr. Michael Keating, and the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, Ambassador Téte António, for their briefings. I also welcome His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who is honouring us with his presence.

I would like to underscore the agreement reached between the Federal Government of Somalia and Puntland, which paves the way for the electoral process of 2016 and for the preparation of the universal elections of 2020, which will take place in the framework of one person, one vote. The agreement represents a positive outcome of the National Leaders Forum, which was held in Mogadishu between 9 and 12 April.

I believe it is important to emphasize the renewed pledge by the Federal Government of Somalia that there will be no extension of the limits of the established constitutional mandate for the legislative and executive branches and that elections for those branches will be held in August 2016; that the constitutional reform will be finalized; and that the Government will determine the number and location of the federal states of Somalia in 2016 in order to fulfil the goals of the federal project. We also welcome the upcoming holding of the National Leaders Forum, which will be followed by a constitutional conference in Garowe in May. A peaceful and transparent electoral process in 2016 will mark a milestone for all Somalis and will be critical to the continued progress of the country towards democracy and stability.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the international community must work in an increasingly close and coordinated manner with the regional administrations and the federal Government to prioritize capacity-building and the strengthening of institutions at the regional level to help regional administrations consolidate their authority and be able to establish step by step the basic conditions for governance, security and the provision of basic services for local populations. My delegation is pleased that the new legislative framework provides that 30 per cent of the parliamentary seats are to be reserved for women in each state member of the federation, and with the emphasis on the importance of increasing participation by women and young people in the political processes.

I cannot fail to mention Uruguay's concern about the continuing threat posed by the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, which continues to lurk in the shadows, despite the progress made in fighting the extremists and the alleged or theoretical loss of their firepower. The fight against Al-Shabaab requires an integrated and comprehensive approach. There must be continued improvement of the interaction with all of civil society in Somalia — including women, young people, businesses and religious leaders — so as to ensure that they form an integral part of the various political processes under way. We underscore the peace and reconciliation agreement that was reached at the end of March among the leaders and representatives of Jubaland and Marehan, which will strengthen the unity in the fight against the extremists.

Security sector reform is vital, in particular the rapid and effective development of the Somali National Army, including a planned and coordinated integration of current regional forces to help facilitate the more effective participation of the Somali National Army in joint operations with the African Union Mission in Somalia so that the security forces of the Federal Government of Somalia, including the police, can assume a greater role in maintaining peace and security and in protecting Somali citizens. In that regard, we welcome the results of the consultative conference on police reform in Somalia, which took place in Nairobi from 21 to 24 March. Many of the outcomes of that conference will be incorporated into a new 2017-2025 Heegan plan.

My delegation places particular emphasis on the need to protect civilians, especially the most vulnerable groups, namely, children, young people, women and the elderly, and we call upon the Federal Government of Somalia to choose the path of mediation and seek out stability, especially in areas where access to humanitarian assistance and supplies is crucial. At the same time, we deplore the fact that foreign and national forces operating in Somalia continue to carry out abuses, attack civilians and violate international humanitarian law.

Finally, I wish to express Uruguay's support for the process that the Federal Government of Somalia is carrying out, which is recognized as the most inclusive process in recent years.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important briefing on the situation in Somalia. I want to welcome President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and commend him for his leadership. I also want to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Mr. Michael Keating, and the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, Ambassador Téte António.

One of the key priorities for Spain in the Security Council is to make headway in efforts to restore peace and stability in Somalia in the wake of so many years of senseless violence and conflict. There still a long road ahead, but considering the extraordinary difficulties that the Somali people and its leaders have managed to overcome in recent years, we have no doubt that success is within grasp. It is now the responsibility of everybody to not let such success slip from our fingers.

The year 2016 is crucial for various reasons. First, in the political sphere, the Somali leadership just approved the electoral process for 2016, after innumerable efforts and an encouraging agreement between the Federal Government of Somalia and Puntland. We welcome that agreement and trust that the Federal Parliament will soon ratify it and that its provisions will be enacted. The adopted format seems to be the most feasible at present and strikes a key balance between two essential elements in the politics of Somali society: the regions, on the one hand, and the clans, on the other. Spain would like to congratulate the Government of Somalia on its decision to set aside 30 per cent of parliamentary seats for women, who must continue to play a key role in the Somali political process, as indeed should civil society as a whole.

The successful conclusion of the electoral process in August 2016, as provided for in the Constitution, is a key step towards making further progress in the establishment of peace in and the stabilization of Somalia so that universal elections can be held in 2020 under the formula of one person, one vote.

We urge the Somali leadership to stick to the path of dialogue and agreement, and to avoid relapsing back into the divisions that derailed the political process in the past. As I said earlier, success is within grasp, but it is incredibly fragile. Let us not forget that a political crisis is capable of destroying in just a matter of days the costly progress that took years to achieve. We therefore now have a historic responsibility. In that regard, we must not lose sight of the importance of making progress in the constitutional review process. In addition, with respect to federal State-building, Spain, which has always recognized the territorial integrity of Somalia, hopes that significant progress will soon be made in Hiran and Middle Shabelle in order to establish a new interim administration, and we trust that reconciliation efforts between clans will be stepped up.

Secondly, turning to the security sector, we robustly condemn the terrorist attacks carried out by Al-Shabaab against the Somali people, their representatives, officials and institutions. We also condemn the attacks carried out against the contingents of the countries of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), who are fighting shoulder to shoulder with Somali forces in order to restore stability and peace in Somalia. We wish to express our full solidarity with the people and Government of Somalia, AMISOM and the Somali security forces.

Somalians should have no doubt on two issues. First, Al-Shabaab can be destroyed and the future Somalia will be defined not by terrorists but by the people of Somalia. Secondly, AMISOM and the Somali National Army will always be on their side. Al-Shabaab represents the greatest threat to the security and stability of Somalia and to the entire Horn of Africa region. Its terrorist activities over the past year show that the group continues to be active, that it has great operational capacity, and that it intends to wreak the greatest possible havoc. Given that challenge, we cannot let down our guard.

After several challenging months, AMISOM and the Somali forces have taken the initiative, although it remains essential that they work in a coordinated fashion to defeat Al-Shabaab. We do not doubt that this is possible, although we continue to insist that AMISOM must develop a more unified and effective command-and-control structure, in line with the recommendations of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. To that end, it will be necessary to build on the key understanding established at the recent summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries of AMISOM, held in Djibouti, which was an important step forward in the right direction.

It is urgent that AMISOM have strengthened and centralized intelligence capacity in place, and we hope that the already committed enabling elements that the Mission needs will be made available as soon as possible. All of that is crucial in order to respond to the asymmetric war tactics employed by Al-Shabaab. The role of the Somali National Army and police is, of course, vital to the achievement of that goal. Both institutions must gradually assume greater responsibility, commensurate with the security demanded by the Somali people, with a view to developing an exit strategy for AMISOM. To that end, we must redouble our efforts to achieve rapid and substantive progress in the area of security sector reform. We urge the Somali authorities to effectively implement the relevant plans.

The Somali army and police should increase their role and effectiveness so as to guarantee security in the areas freed from Al-Shabaab, and also to secure the main supply routes. We wish to stress that the fight against Al-Shabaab is more than a military operation. It should be rooted in a firm strategy that prevents radicalization and recruitment from various sectors of the Somali population, in particular youth. Young people must believe that Somali institutions and the international community are on their side. The fight against Al-Shabaab must take place within the framework of respect for the political leadership and human rights, and go hand in hand with genuine and systematic efforts to ensure security, the provision of basic services and opportunities for the populations in recovered areas.

For my third point, which is no less important, I wish to speak about the grave humanitarian situation. Some 4.9 million Somalis are in need of humanitarian aid. The drought that is racking the north of the country, in particular Somaliland and Puntland, as a result of the weather phenomenon known as El Niño has left some 900,000 individuals facing severe malnutrition. That tragic situation, exacerbated by desertification, is unacceptable and unsustainable. Alleviating the humanitarian emergency faced by Somalia is essential in building on the efforts made in the area of politics and security, given that all of those dimensions are interrelated.

Rebuilding Somalia will require the rebuilding of Somalians' trust in their institutions. It is therefore necessary that members of civil society perceive a tangible improvement in their quality of life — in their access not only to water and food, but also to education and employment. All of that will ultimately determine the success of the Somali process and the ultimate defeat of Al-Shabaab.

Our leaders are preparing to sign the Paris Agreement on climate change next Friday in these very Headquarters. We must now be more aware than ever that climate change is neither an abstract issue nor a problem for the future. It is a threat that is already shaping the life expectancy of millions of people around the world, thrusting specific populations and countries, such as Somalia, into a situation of environmental, economic and social stress, with direct repercussions for international peace and security. This is a horizontal and structural challenge that we must rise to meet with all resources as soon as we have them.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore that Spain is convinced that the establishment of peace and stability in and the development of Somalia will not be possible without the reconstruction of the Somali State and civil society. We can achieve those goals only if we have a unified and committed leadership that acts in the interests of all Somalians. The United Nations, regional organizations and countries that have friendly relations with Somalia will continue to support the country on that path. With every passing month, we are increasingly convinced that we are drawing closer to a time in which Somalians can take full responsibility of their own future.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I would like to begin by thanking you, Sir, for convening this timely meeting in the presence of the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia. I would like to express my appreciation to President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for joining us today in the Security Council, and commend his leadership. I also thank him for his very forceful presentation. Let me also join others in thanking Mr. Michael Keating and Ambassador Téte António for their informative briefings.

After a long endeavours, Somalia is at last moving towards State-building. This year is especially crucial for the political transition process in Somalia. Successful implementation of the electoral process is a test case. Japan welcomes the decision by the federal Government of Somalia on an electoral model for 2016 based on inclusive, Somali-led discussions. We are also delighted at the very encouraging news on the National Leaders Forum on 12 April, where the detailed structures and modalities of the electoral process were agreed among the Somali leaders. It is now important to deliver on the electoral process in August, as expected. We call upon all parties of Somali to engage constructively towards that end. There is an urgent need to make progress on the completion of the State formation and constitutional review processes and on the political road map in order to realize a one person/one vote election by 2020.

We look forward to the constitutional conference producing a positive outcome in May. The Security Council should continue to do all that it can, and Japan fully supported the adoption of resolution 2275 (2016), which extended the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) until the end of March of next year.

Turning to the security aspect, Al-Shabaab still remains a major threat. Japan strongly condemns all territorial attacks and pays tribute to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army for their work under the harsh conditions on the ground. In order to prevent Al-Shabaab from making further gains, we believe that it is crucial that offensive operations against it be carried out in an even more closely coordinated manner. We welcome the holding of the recent summit of the troop- and police-contributing countries to AMISOM, as well as the commitment to improving coordination within AMISOM as a step in that direction.

Security sector reform is also important. The coordinated integration of regional forces in the Somali National Army will make joint operations with AMISOM more effective. Extending basic policing services throughout the country, including within the liberated areas, is equally important, as is capacity-building for the maritime police force. We welcome President Mohamud's commitments to push forward those reforms.

Somalia's State-building efforts must be Somali-led, but at the same time be supported by the international community. For its part, Japan recently provided additional assistance in the amount of $38.5 million, which will be implemented by various United Nations agencies. That assistance will be used for State-building in Somalia, enhancing basic social services, strengthening the capacity of the security sector and revitalizing the economy. Assistance for tackling the challenges that I have mentioned today is included, such as support for the establishment of the national electoral commission and strengthening the police force. They will be implemented by ANSOM and the United Nations Development Programme.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Japan's strong commitment to assisting Somalia at this crucial juncture.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to welcome the presence and the statement of His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia. I also thank Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, and Ambassador Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, for their briefings.

The security situation in Somalia, as well as in all of the Horn of Africa, is fragile as a result of the actions of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, the presence of armed groups and criminal organizations and the increase in the trafficking in small arms and light weapons throughout the entire region. The peacebuilding process in Somalia is taking place in a context in which the progress made has not been without difficulties. A year ago, we welcomed the achievements of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in the fight against Al-Shabaab. Today, we note with concern the re-emergence of Al-Shabaab, marked by asymmetric bloody attacks carried out against civilians, AMISOM and Somalia's own armed forces. We see how a more assertive Al-Shabaab, with hundreds of combatants, is launching attacks against military targets. We note with concern how AMISOM contingents are barricading themselves in and limiting their security patrols to those of defensive perimeters. We recall with dismay the victims of brutal attacks by Al-Shabaab against civilians, AMISOM and the Somalia's armed forces that resulted in hundreds of deaths over the past six months.

Despite those threats and difficulties, Somalia is making progress in the arduous process of establishing legitimate institutions throughout the country, laying the foundations so that, once peace is achieved, there will be no relapse into conflict. The process is painstaking and challenging. The Somali State is still fighting to establish its presence and authority throughout its entire national territory. Occasionally, the Somali armed forces and local authorities are unable to hold or maintain territory that they have wrested from Al-Shabaab. In that vein, international support to the Somali security sector is essential and must be maintained with increasing transparency, within the framework of the development plans of the Federal Government. It is also vital to support efforts aimed at extending State authority to very corner of the country so that local administrations can provide basic services to their populations. It is essential to shore up the institutional capacity of the country. Only in that way, can it meet the hard challenges that it faces.

In that regard, we also acknowledge the need to address violent extremism in Somalia holistically, going beyond a strictly military approach and rolling out strategies that address the root causes of radicalization. Given those circumstances, the support of the international community and the commitment of the United Nations need to be more present than ever. Our country is therefore of the opinion that the Security Council must consider supporting the appeal for a lifting of the sanctions, in particular the arms embargo, thereby contributing to strengthening the State and Somalia's armed forces in its fight against Al-Shabaab and other scourges that threaten the well-being and stability of the country.

The United Nations must be more effective in the way it works to cut off sources of funding for Al-Shabaab, while respecting the sovereign right of Somalia to develop its natural resources and ensure subsistence for those communities whose livelihoods depend upon the extraction trade and artisanal trade. Even as the embargo on charcoal has been tightened, Al-Shabaab has merely developed new funding sources of funding, including, among others, racketeering, extorting money from private businesses, blackmailing, holding members of the local population for ransom, extorting fees on transportation and trading illegally in natural resources, as well as donations from the Somali diaspora.

That stands in stark contrast with the revenue challenges facing the Federal Government of Somalia and of the question of how to sustain itself fiscally. One of the primary sources of income is the collection of taxes. However, international corporations in Somalia provide very little revenue to the country. In the specific case of the oil industry, we see how it is seeking to divide the country by taking advantage of the concept of federalism to exploit the State's institutional weakness and secure lucrative contracts that are of little benefit to the sustainable development of the Somali people. In order to address the challenges facing the country, there is a need to strengthen State institutions and bolster capacities for exercising full sovereign control over its natural resources. For instance, illegal fishing in Somalia's exclusive economic zone jeopardizes the survival of thousands of small-scale fishers who, given their economic conditions, are apt to turn to criminal or destabilizing activities.

On another front, I would like to mention the humanitarian situation, which continues to be very complex, with more than 4 million people still requiring humanitarian aid, over 1 million facing food insecurity and over 300,000 children suffering from acute malnutrition, of whom 58,000 are suffering from severe malnutrition. The needs of the more than 1.1 million displaced persons is urgent, and the recent drought has only made things worse. We call on the international community unconditionally to provide the necessary financial resources to alleviate the pressing humanitarian needs of the Somali population, who have been affected by recurring conflict and economic, social and environmental hardships. Unfortunately, reports speak of difficulties in gaining access to the areas most in need, and the endless negotiations and payment of fees in many part of the country seem to be the norm for humanitarian convoys, particularly in areas where Al-Shabaab is present.

From a political perspective, we welcome the mediation efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union that led to the recent decision of the President of Puntland, Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gaas, to accept the electoral formula for the 2016 elections. We also stress the vital role played by women in economic, political and social life in Somalia. We therefore commend the Federal Government in Somalia's decision to reserve 30 per cent of available seats for women in the 2016 parliamentary elections.

In that regard, it is important that all political sectors in Somalia understand that it is only in political unity that can they effectively address the phenomenon of terrorism, defeat Al-Shabaab and strengthen their State institutions in order to ensure that Somalia can meet the major challenges that still lie before it. We wish the electoral process every success and call for the deployment of an important security presence to ensure the peaceful holding of elections throughout Somalia.

We underscire the role that the Federal Constitution of Somalia must play as the bedrock of stability and the peaceful development of politics in the country. It will provide the legal framework that will shape the destiny of the people. We call for the review process of the key chapters of the provisional constitution to be completed swiftly. By the same token, we encourage the Federal Government to engage the emerging federal states and their people in the review process and consultations on the development of this Magna Carta for Somalia through a widespread civic education campaign that will achieve a broad and lasting social consensus based on the inclusion of all sectors of society.

Finally, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates its commitment to the peace, security and development of Somalia and the entire region of the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): We welcome His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and greatly value the opportunity for the Council to hear directly his perspectives on the situation in Somalia. We also thank Mr. Keating and Ambassador Téte António for their updates.

Somalia was one of the defining issues when New Zealand last served on the Security Council. Two decades later, Somalia is in a much better position, but it remains an important item on our agenda, with far-reaching implications for regional peace and security and the fight against terrorism.

We welcome the progress achieved through the bravery and commitment of soldiers and other personnel from the African Union (AU), neighbouring countries, international partners and Somalia itself. As a result, Al-Shabaab has been weakened. There were no successful instances of piracy in the past year. Most importantly, progress has been made towards a functioning Federal Government, with the prospect of a democratic transition this year. This has come at a truly awful cost to Somalia, its neighbours and the AU, and significant challenges lie ahead. Sustained political attention will be required to deal with each of those challenges, and the Council must maintain its focus on Somalia.

We support the analysis presented by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Michael Keating and wish to highlight five points.

First, we agree that this year's elections are critical. They need to be Somali-led and ensure that the Somali people are fully involved and feel ownership of the political process. We welcome the agreement reached at last week's Somali Leaders Forum in Mogadishu on the details of the electoral model. We also take note of President Mohamud's reminder that these elections will be the first in 47 years. That is a truly remarkable event and one that we all applaud.

Secondly, other political priorities require attention. Dialogue between the Federal Government of Somalia and regional administrations has been positive but needs to go further. Key issues still need to be addressed, including setting regional boundaries, completing the constitutional review and determining the governance of natural resources. The federal project relies on strengthening institutions in the regions. Federal and regional authorities need to make progress here to avoid jeopardizing the political transition. Somali civil society needs to have a bigger role. Furthermore, if peace is to be sustainable, stabilization will be critical in terms of effective service delivery for people in areas under Somali Government control. There is still a long way to go in these areas.

Thirdly, a well-functioning security sector is fundamental to long-term stability in Somali. The Federal Government needs to be supported to have the sufficient capacity to both prevent a resurgence of Al-Shabaab and other vectors of terrorism and to provide checks on regional and clan-based conflict. We welcome the efforts of international partners to strengthen the Somali National Army and the police force. However, there is an urgent need for closer coordination. The efforts will be successful only if partners programmes are made more coherent and if the silos are broken down. Building a strong and coherent army and police force will be essential to the implementation of a successful exit strategy for the international community.

Fourthly, 2016 will be a particularly important year for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The Al-Shabaab threat continues to be very real and AMISOM's role remains critical. The implementation of the commitments made by AMISOM's contributors at the Djibouti summit will be of fundamental importance, particularly with regard to commitments concerning command and control.

Lastly, I note that New Zealand is deeply concerned about the financing challenges facing AMISOM. Continued international support for the Mission will be essential if it is to fulfil its mandate. We acknowledge the important funding that the European Union continues to provide. With the reallocation of some of that funding, it will be important to work with partners in the region and further afield to ensure that AMISOM's current funding challenges are addressed in a manner that does not undermine its operations at this critical juncture.

This situation also underlines the need to move beyond our reliance on ad hoc financing for regionally led peace operations in Africa. New Zealand is a strong supporter of finding innovative solutions that can provide more predictable funding for such missions. That is something which we need to collectively explore. We welcome efforts to mobilize funding from within Africa and hope that the international community, including the United Nations, can be strategic and creative in working out how to properly support the robust missions that the African Union is prepared to lead.

In conclusion, we know that achieving what we have outlined today will be difficult. We also know that, while the Federal Government has a central role to play, it cannot do this alone. The Council, the United Nations system, the African Union and other partners need to work closely with the Somali authorities in meeting these challenges. But we also remember today the great distance that Somalia has already travelled. We must all continue to support the Somali Government and people in their efforts to come together.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I join colleagues around the table in expressing my appreciation to the Chinese presidency for convening this timely and important meeting. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keating and Ambassador Téte António for their insightful briefings on the latest developments in Somalia.

My delegation acknowledges and welcomes the presence of His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of Somalia, in the Chamber this morning. President Mohamud's presence today is a testament of his deep and abiding commitment to returning Somalia to normalcy and restoring hope for a better future for Somalia's people, who have suffered far too long from conflict and deprivation. We commend the steadily improving situation in Somalia since 2012 under President Mohamud's leadership. Let us hope that the Federal Government and the Federal State Governments in Somalia will stay the course for more significant progress on the political, social and economic fronts, particularly in the crucial weeks and months ahead.

The year 2016 is of particular significance for Somalia. After more than two decades of brutal conflict and the prolonged erosion of fundamental democratic norms and practices, the country will undertake a major and crucial step later this year in making greater progress towards re-establishing itself as a functioning State. To create the right enablers to drive that transformation, the Security Council and the international community must continue to remain actively engaged in Somalia, particularly in supporting the Federal and regional authorities in their efforts to restore peace and security, as well as in bringing much-needed socioeconomic development and progress to the people.

On the political front, Malaysia welcomes the strong regional support and engagement with Somalia, particularly by the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). We commend ongoing efforts by the Federal Government of Somalia and the regional states in seeking consensus on the electoral model. The IGAD facilitation has led to recent announcement, on 3 April, by Puntland authorities to assent to the 4.5 model for the 2016 transition process. The successful outcome and conclusions, earlier this month, at the third National Leaders Forum, and the positive momentum created should be seized by stakeholders in the Hiraan and Middle Shabelle regions to put aside their differences and work constructively with the Federal Government in order to establish a sustainable regional authority ahead of the scheduled electoral process.

Although elections based on one-person/one-vote will not be possible this year, the inclusive process leading to agreement on key principles of the electoral process should pave the way for more representative elections in 2020. In the same vein, the Federal Government and the regional authorities should be encouraged to expedite work in constituting the upper House of the legislature and to ensure that women's voices are adequately represented, particularly of the inclusionist candidates for the upcoming elections.

On the development front, Malaysia welcomes and supports the outcomes of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development for Somalia, held in Istanbul in February, and commends the commitment of Federal Government to implement the outcomes. In addition, the recently concluded thirteenth Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held in Istanbul last week, also welcomed the transformation of the OIC Humanitarian Coordination Office in Somalia into a development office, reflecting the positive developments on the ground since 2011, when the OIC Office was first established.

While noting the significant progress Somalia has made in pursuing its development goals, the humanitarian situation in the country continues to be of concern. That includes chronic food insecurity, malnutrition, poor access to water, sanitation and hygiene, displacement, as well as the cyclical violence attributed chiefly to armed violence, including by terrorist groups and through clan-based conflicts. Compounding that is the ongoing El Niño phenomenon. All those elements threaten to exacerbate the already precarious situation. All regional and international actors and donors should step in to provide assistance to the 5 million Somalis in dire need, which include approximately 300,000 children. Unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance must be secured from all stakeholders in the country.

On the security front, Malaysia joins other Council members in welcoming the ongoing efforts aimed at strengthening Somalia's security sector and institutions, including the recently held African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troop- and police-contributing country summit held in Djibouti and the African Union-United Nations Joint Task Force consultative meetings held in late February and late March, respectively. Malaysia fully supports the early roll-out and implementation of stabilizing efforts in areas newly liberated from Al-Shabaab, including through quick-impact projects. Such initiatives will help to promote local economies and form an important component of the overall efforts of the Federal Government to win the hearts and minds of local communities. In line with the commitments made at the AMISOM troop- and police-contributors summit, all the parties concerned should strengthen command and control for better coordination, particularly with a view to degrade and eradicate the threat posed by Al-Shabaab.

At a time when political tensions appear to be increasing, and against the backdrop of increasing intensity and frequency of complex attacks and operations by Al-Sabaab, particularly against civilians and civilian targets, the 20 per cent reduction of AMISOM troop allowances raises concerns. In that regard, we welcome the AU-United Nations Joint Task Force agreement to address the funding issue.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the tireless dedication and sacrifices made by all security sector actors in Somalia, particularly the brave men and women of the Somalia national security forces, AMISOM, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). In that regard, Malaysia affirms its support for AMISOM, UNSOM, UNSOS and the Federal Government's collective efforts to pave the way for Somalia to secure its place in the community of nations — a Somalia that is secure, stable and engaged in pursuit of national development for a better future.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Keating, and the Permanent Observer of the African Union, His Excellency Ambassador Tête António. I would particularly like to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who has honoured us with his presence today. I also thank him for the encouraging news that he shared with us.

The information provided by the President is important given the worrying news from Somalia over the past month. Al-Shabaab has been degraded, which is good, but the terrorist organization remains active. Combating Al-Shabaab is a fight against one of the many manifestations of terrorism, and everyone knows that fight is very close to our hearts in France. The fight against Al-Shabaab is a collective one. I would like to commend the courage and commitment of the personnel of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in combating that criminal organization. I would particularly like to pay tribute to the soldiers who lost their lives in the latest attacks. France, through the United Nations and the European Union, remains fully committed alongside the troop-contributing countries in those efforts. With a view to continuing to consolidate the progress made over recent years, we must do more in four areas.

First, AMISOM, which is in the front line of the fight against Al-Shabaab, in accordance with its mandate, must conduct offensive operations in the fight against that terrorist organizationThe situation on the gournd is complex and the enemy adapts its strategies as circumstances evolve. In that context, in order to mount an offensive, AMISOM must continue to improve its effectiveness and functioning, thereby bringing the maximum pressure to bear on the terrorist organization that is Al-Shabaab.

AMISOM contingents must act in a cohesive manner and with a single, clear chain of command, including shared planning and execution and with better information-sharing among the various contingents, which has not always been the case. Resolution 2124 (2013) already called for such qualitative improvements — an appeal reiterated in resolution 2234 (2015). The declaration by the troop-contributing countries adopted at the Djibouti summit on 28 February takes up those varous points. AMISOM would greatly benefit from their swift implementation, beginning with the appointment of a Force Commander, while the United Nations should once again review the modalities for logistical support in order to provide better-adapted and more effective assistance. We therefore call on the African Union and the troop-contributing countries to work together to improve the work of the Mission, in line with its mandate.

I would add that an effective military fight against Al-Shabaab also requires exemplary conduct on the part of AMISOM troops in terms of respect for human rights law and international humanitarian law. A military intervention can be successful only if it is supported by the Somali people. The setting up of the Civilian Casualty Tracking, Analysis and Response Cell should improve efforts in that connection, while also advancing the credibility and effectiveness of AMISOM. Similarly, the matter of impunity for some contingents is also problematic, as it undermines the reputation of the Mission and makes people on the ground less likely to embrace it.

But everyone knows that AMISOM all by itself is not a sustainable solution and that it is not intended to stay in Somalia forever. The development of a Somali security solution will allow us to consider, at the appropriate time, the drawdown of the Mission and an exit strategy for the force. That will require the gradual re-establishment of the authority of the Somali State over its territory by developing its capacity to ensure its own security, including that of its security forces.

The role of the Somali security forces is particularly necessary to support the efforts of AMISOM. It is also necessary to retain the areas liberated by AMISOM so that the African Union forces can focus on offensive actions. The Somali authorities must continually demonstrate their commitment to this undertaking, starting by paying their security forces. A number of bilateral and multilateral international partners are already active in this area, but their actions should undoubtedly be better coordinated. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, which has a key mandate in the coordination of international aid, must play this role better.

To conclude, I would say that only political action will permanently free the country from the crisis in which it has been entangled for for 25 years. This year is crucial as the election deadlines draw near. We are encouraged by the progress that has been made in framework of the National Consultative Forum and the choice of electoral modalities. Alongside the preparation of elections, in accordance with the deadlines, Somali political actors need to demonstrate their responsibility by completing the federalization of the country. The development of the Somali security solution that I mentioned earlier will depend largely on that eventuality, and it is our shared priority. We count on all Somali actors to rapidly finalize this project.

France understands the magnitude of the challenges Somalia is facing, as the level of our collective commitment demonstrates. Political mobilization must forthwith consolidate the military gains made in recent years. We hope that 2016 will be decisive in that respect.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): Mr. President, I would like to thank you for organizing today's meeting on Somalia. I wish to welcome the President of Somalia, Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and thank him for honoring us with his presence and sharing his views on the situation in Somalia and his hope for the future of his country. I would also like to thank Mr. Michael Keating for his briefing and Ambassador Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union, for his briefing on behalf of the High Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union.

The briefings provided enabled members of the Security Council to better understand the progress and challenges faced by the people and the Government of Somalia, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the United Nations and other international partners of Somalia, which have joined forces to build a peaceful, stable and prosperous Somalia. The progress we are all witnessing is a reward for the investment we are all making towards peace in a country that has long faced a very brutal war.

I take this opportunity to praise the Somalis for reaching agreement on the electoral process. The 4.5 formula as the electoral model will allow for the holding of elections in Somalia while taking into account the various sensibilities and influential role of the elders and traditional and religious leaders. We commend the national consultative process regarding the electoral process, which took into account the different points of view expressed by the various communities that compose the Somali ethnic mosaic. We also take note of the commitment of the Somali stakeholders to the universal ballot in the elections to take place in 2020.

Significant progress has also been made in the constitutional review process and in the development of the federal system, while relevant legislation has recently been passed by Parliament regarding money-laundering, counter-terrorism financing and the protection and promotion of the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children. The national gender policy, the national youth policy and the national development plan for 2017-2019 were important legislative milestones. We praise the Somali legislative body for these important achievements.

While we take note of the continuous progress in Somalia, the country still faces considerable challenges, especially regarding the humanitarian situation, which needs to be urgently addressed. Also, the fight against and defeat of Al-Shabaab aew imperative if the country is to make progress towards peace and stability. In this regard, predictable funding is an absolute necessity that we have to take into account for AMISOM.

We welcome the progress achieved in capacity-building for the Somali National Army and the Somali police force, and the financial commitment of international partners to developing programmes and projects for upgrading the Army and the police. This is also another important requirement, as the country needs to be organized to guarantee its own defence as peace continues to be built. It is important that the federal and regional authorities ensure the strict compliance of security operations with international standards regarding human rights and respect for the rule of law. The Federal Government of Somalia and the interim regional administrations need to create a secure environment for the civilian population, bridging any existing gaps and addressing intercommunal conflicts.

In conclusion, I wish to convey to the President of Somalia Angola's full support. We know that it is important that the country be reborn. The rebirth of the country needs to be an absolute objective that can be achieved. From the discussion this morning, the Security Council is again reassured of that. We therefore look forward to seeing a brighter future with peace, prosperity and sustainable development in the country.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would first of all like to warmly welcome the president of Somalia his Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. We also extend our appreciation to both briefers.

My delegation commends the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia and other parties involved in close cooperation with the Federal Government of Somalia. We welcome the progress achieved in the areas of State-building, good governance and restoring peace security and economic growth, which are crucially important in the light of upcoming parliamentary elections. We especially praise the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia in ensuring security in the country and their significance for the further establishment of peace and reconciliation. The recent extension of the Mission's mandate underscored the importance of UNSOM activities in support of the work of the Federal Government of Somalia.

Ukraine strongly condemns the recent suicide bombings in the city of Gaalkacyo and the suicide car bombing at the Banadir regional administration headquarters in Mogadishu, which took the lives of 14 people, including two children. Recalling the Al-Shabaab attack in March on the coastal village of Garad, on the shores of Puntland, which included large numbers of children among the Al-Shabaab militants, we want to express our deep concern about the recruitment of children and their use in armed conflicts, along with other violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated against children in conflict situations.

It is very troubling that the recruitment of children and young people into Al-Shabaab is happening in mosques and schools. We believe firmly that every effort must be made to ensure that schools meet their goal of being educational facilities first and foremost, offering students a path to a better and more peaceful future. The sanctity of places of religious worship must also be respected, and they should not be used as poaching grounds for finding foot soldiers to fill in the ranks of terrorist groups. In our view, it is extremely important to improve the provisions for child protection in the mandates of the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia in order to strengthen the Missions' abilities to effectively recognize, report and respond to violations and abuses committed against children, including their abduction by armed groups.

Ukraine acknowledges the positive impact of the collective steps taken by the United Nations and the Puntland authorities to make the necessary arrangements for ensuring the proper treatment of former child soldiers recruited by terrorists, in order to rehabilitate and eventually reunite them with their families. Such children and young people should have an opportunity to complete their education and learn a trade so as to be able to make a living and contribute to their communities.

We commend the Federal Government of Somalia's drafting of a national security policy and plans for a consultative meeting in the regions aimed at advancing its implementation. The deliberations on a new policing model and updated Heegan plan for developing the Somalia police at the Federal, regional and state levels deserve special mention, as an essential element in the provision of improved safety and security to the local populations in every region in Somalia.

We also welcome the announcement, on 25 March, of a comprehensive agreement on peace and reconciliation among the peoples of Jubaland. We call on the Federal Government of Somalia to continue to cooperate with all the relevant stakeholders in order to resolve the longstanding disputes between various communities and administrations in the rest of Somalia. The agreement reached between the Federal Government and the Puntland Government with a letter agreeing to Puntland's full participation in the electoral process with the goal of forming a new Federal Parliament later this year represents another positive step on the way to achieving administrative unity in the country.

Considering that progress, the Security Council should stay focused on maintaining the current positive trends and securing the implementation of all of the Federal Government's initiatives aimed at establishing sustainable peace and completing the reconciliation process. The President of Somalia can rely on our continued support.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal would like to thank the Chinese presidency for organizing today's briefing and to welcome the presence in the Chamber of Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia. I would also like to thank our briefers this morning, Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, and Ambassador Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union, for their clear presentations, which have given us a better understanding of the political, security and humanitarian situation in Somalia, as well as the challenges it is dealing with, particularly in the current pre-election period.

In that regard, I would also like to welcome the agreement concluded by Somali leaders, including President Mohamud, and the Presidents of the regional states of Puntland, Southwest, Galmudug and Jubaland, on the modalities for implementing the 2016 electoral process, at the Somali Leaders Forum held from 9 to 12 April. The communiqué announcing the agreement is a clear expression of the growing consensus among Somalia's leadership on the country's governance. The Forum also enabled them to arrive at agreement on the 2016 electoral process at the Federal and state levels regarding the parliamentary elections. In that regard, we offer them our encouragement and support for the success of the process, which should help to normalize the situation in Somalia.

However, in order to achieve that, Somalia and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) will need the support of their international partners more than ever. We therefore encourage the African Union Mission in Somalia to maintain its strong support to the country. However, we urge greater vigilance in ensuring that the violence around the election mentioned by the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group in its most recent report (see S/2015/801) does not spread to the rest of the country.

On the security front, we remain concerned about the persistent threat posed by Al-Shabaab to the liberated territories, which are also areas of intercommunal tension, as well as by the growing presence of the Islamic State in the region. Despite those continuing threats, Senegal welcomed the liberation of the town of Adan Yabaal, in Middle Shabelle region, after a major offensive against Al-Shabaab led by AMISOM and the Somali National Army. We encourage such joint operations, which will unquestionably enable people displaced by collateral damage — lack of water and electricity, vandalized equipment, burned food stocks, explosive devices planted by Al-Shabaab and so forth — to return home. The rapid provision of financing and technical support for the security sector by the international community will undoubtedly help to improve strategies for combating armed groups, including Al-Shabaab.

We firmly condemn all attacks on humanitarian personnel, the expropriation of aid and the creation of obstacles to its transportation, regardless of the perpetrators. In that regard, Senegal would like to pay tribute to the staff of AMISOM, some of whom have made the ultimate sacrifice in the fight against Al-Shabaab. We would also like to salute the Somali national defence forces for their sacrifices, commitment and determination to defeat Al-Shabaab and achieve lasting peace in Somalia.

Somalia's mining resources continue to be the object of growing interest from international corporations, and that too has the potential to be a threat to the country's peace, security and stability. In that regard, we condemn the continuing violations of the ban on exports of charcoal from Somalia despite a slight improvement in the situation in the wake of Al-Shabaab's withdrawal from the production sites. We reiterate our call for a coordinated effort among the Federal Government, the Federal states and the international organizations and military forces on the ground to establish a thorough and effective mechanism for combating the illegal trade in Somali charcoal. In that context, we commend the efforts of maritime forces to fight illicit trafficking in natural resources.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Senegal's support and encouragement to the people and the Government of Somalia as they look forward to the elections scheduled for this year.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I welcome the President of Somalia, His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, to this meeting and thank him for his statement. I also thank Mr. Keating, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, and Ambassador António, the Permanent Observer of the African to the United Nations, for their briefings.

With elections scheduled for later this year, Somalia's peace process is entering a crucial period. Recently, the Federal Government of Somalia has made active efforts to promote social reconciliation, combat terrorism, advance federal institution-building and comprehensively implement Vision 2016. China highly appreciates the able leadership of President Mohamud and is confident that, under his leadership, the Somali people will continue to achieve new progress on national reconciliation. At the same time, the security and humanitarian situation in the country remains fragile and the attainment of peace and development is still an arduous task. In that connection, I wish to emphasize the following four points.

First, all parties should continue to push forward the peace process in Somalia. China welcomes the fact that President Mohamud and the leaders of all parties in Somalia held a National Leaders Forum recently and reached a consensus on the electoral process for the 2016 elections. We hope that all the parties will put the long-term interests of their nation and their people above all else, strengthen dialogue, settle their differences and work together for peace, stability and development in their country. The international community should adhere to the principle of Somali ownership and Somali leadership, effectively help the Federal Government advance the peace process, reinforce federation-building, comprehensively improve its administrative capacity, expedite local institution-building, promote social reconciliation and bring about lasting peace and the sustainable development of Somalia.

Secondly, emphasis should be placed on consolidating the security environment in Somalia. The terrorist group Al-Shabaab still poses a grave threat to security in the country. Recently, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army have worked together to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation and have achieved remarkable results. China strongly condemns the terrorist attacks against AMISOM and appreciates the important contributions made by the African Union and countries in the region to the maintenance of security and stability in Somalia. We welcome the summit of the AMISOM troop- and police-contributing countries in February, and expect the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and other parties concerned to work together and continue to provide sustained and stable logistical support to AMISOM and the Somali National Army, thereby creating external conditions favourable to the advancement of the Somali political process.

Thirdly, efforts are needed to comprehensively promote the development of the Somali economy. Development is the only way to eliminate the root causes of conflicts and achieve lasting stability in Somalia. Somalia is endowed with rich natural resources and has enormous potential for development. The international community should increase its assistance to Somalia aimed at building infrastructure and developing its agriculture, boosting job creation and improving development so that the Somali people can enjoy the dividends of peace at an early date. China expects the World Bank and other international financial institutions and development agencies to honour their commitments of assistance as soon as possible and to provide effective support for Somalia's economic development and the improvement of its people's lives by focusing on strengthening the country's ability to sustain itself, based on its development needs, in order to lay a solid foundation for its future development.

Fourthly, the international community should further improve its coordination with regard to the Somali question and create synergy. China supports a leading role played by the United Nations in coordinating the international efforts aimed at assisting Somalia. We also support the constructive help provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia in promoting the political process and starting national reconstruction in Somalia. China welcomes the meeting held in February by the High-Level Partnership Forum on Somalia, which further consolidated the consensus of the international community for Somalia's development. It is hoped that, in providing assistance to Somalia, the international community will continue to increase its consultation and cooperation with the Federal Government of Somalia, fully respect its views and focus on the priority areas and overall direction of the country's development with a view to forging synergy among assistance efforts.

China and Africa form a community of shared destiny and interests. At the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation last December, China's President Xi Jinping proposed 10 areas in which China wants to engage in pragmatic cooperation with Africa: industrialization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure, financial resources, green development, trade and investment facilitation, poverty reduction and public welfare, public health, people-to-people exchanges, and peace and security. China is ready to join hands with African countries, including Somalia, in a concerted and active effort to follow up on the Summit's outcomes and, in the light of Africa's actual needs, help the continent to improve people's livelihoods and enhance African countries' own development capacities.

For many years, China has firmly supported the Somali peace process and provided Somalia and AMISOM with assistance to the best of its ability. China has also trained a large number of talented people for the country's reconstruction under the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. We are ready to work with the international community in our ongoing and unremitting efforts for peace, stability, prosperity and development in Somalia and the Horn of Africa.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7675

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7675th meeting

Monday, 25 April 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Liu Jieyi	(China)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Mizushina
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea

Letter dated 6 April 2016 from the representatives of Angola, China and Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/321)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea

Letter dated 6 April 2016 from the representatives of Angola, China and Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/321)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Belgium, Brazil, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Kazakhstan, Italy, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Togo and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/321, which contains a letter dated 6 April 2016 from the representatives of Angola, China and Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zerihoun.

Mr. Zerihoun: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. As the Council is well aware, the issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea is regularly covered in the biannual briefings by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for the Central and West African regions. However, this is the first time in almost five years that the Security Council has dedicated a meeting to the subject.

Over the past few years, there has been a steady decline in the number of recorded incidents of piracy, armed robbery at sea and other illicit activities in the Gulf of Guinea. However, insecurity at sea remains a source of concern in the region. In the first quarter of 2016, the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre recorded six attacks and six attempted attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, including nine in Nigeria, one in Côte d'Ivoire and two within the territorial waters of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Cases of the hijacking of vessels off the coast of Nigeria for political purposes by the self-described Biafra militants, and kidnappings along the coasts of Western and Central Africa, have also recently been recorded.

The Council may recall that, following an upsurge in incidents of piracy, armed robbery at sea and other illicit activities in the Gulf of Guinea, its resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012) encouraged the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) to develop a comprehensive regional anti-piracy strategy for the Gulf with United Nations support.

As a result, the ECOWAS, ECCAS and GGC Summit of Heads of State and Government of on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea was held in Yaoundé in June 2013, with the support of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa. During the Summit, the Heads of State and Government committed to working towards the promotion of peace, security and stability in the Gulf of Guinea. Notably, the Summit adopted a memorandum of understanding on maritime safety and security in the Central and West African regions that set objectives and areas of cooperation; a code of conduct; and a political declaration on enhancing cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea. The Summit also agreed on the creation of the Gulf of Guinea Interregional Coordination Centre to implement the regional strategy for maritime safety and security, and established a clear division of labour that charged the regional organizations with responsibility for strategy and coordination, and the States with responsibility for operations.

The Interregional Coordination Centre was inaugurated in Yaoundé on 11 September 2014 to coordinate all operations with regard to the suppression of piracy and other criminal activities in the Gulf of Guinea. This marked an important and positive step in the cooperation between West and Central Africa in the fight against piracy and crimes at sea in the Gulf of Guinea region. The Interregional Cooperation Centre is expected to coordinate two regional maritime coordination centres: the Regional Maritime Security Centre for Central Africa (CRESMAC), located in Pointe-Noire, Republic of the Congo, and the yet-to-be established regional maritime security centre for West Africa, to be located in Abidjan.

The regional maritime coordination centre for Central Africa has been operational since its official launch in October 2014, while the multinational and regional maritime coordination centres are at different stages of operationalization. However, despite its inauguration in 2014, the Interregional Coordination Centre itself is not fully operational due to staffing, funding and other logistical constraints.

An extraordinary meeting of thed Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission was held in Yaoundé on 12 February to address the challenges in the operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre. Both the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for West Africa and for Central Africa attended the meeting on behalf of the United Nations. The meeting reviewed the staff recruitment and procedures of the Interregional Coordination Centre, the budget for the second half of this year and for 2017, as well as a proposed programme of activities.

With regard to the budget, the meeting recommended that member States contribute 40 percent of the necessary resources, while bilateral and international partners would contribute the rest. The Summit also recommended that ECCAS, ECOWAS, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and their member States expedite the disbursement of funds to allow for the operationalization of the International Criminal Court between July and December this year. Moreover, it was proposed that additional sources of funding be explored through the taxation of beneficiaries of the ports situated in the Gulf of Guinea region.

The mobilization of resources remains a key priority for ensuring the effective operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre, particularly given that a significant component of the Centre's budgetary resources is expected to come from bilateral and international partners. For that reason, the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission have agreed in principle on the organization of a future conference of partners and third-party contributors in Yaoundé. The conference is expected to be held immediately after the meeting of the G7++ and Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, which is scheduled to be held on 6 and 7 June in Lisbon. The United Nations is committed to assisting in this endeavour through its regional offices in Central and West Africa.

Tackling international crimes of trafficking, piracy and theft requires a combination of efforts and an understanding that suppression, while necessary, is not sufficient. Those who commit illegal acts at sea are highly adaptable, increasingly sophisticated in their methods and often well-informed. This requires national, regional and global efforts to be flexible and proactive. Initiatives aimed at addressing socioeconomic development and lack of job opportunities are also required to provide prospects to marginalized populations that may be involved in piracy activities, most notably young people.

Ultimately, countering the current threats will require a combination of capacities, including qualitative improvements in the collection of intelligence; the sharing and improved analysis of intelligence; the enhancement of capacities in both the infrastructure and training of local law-enforcement agencies of the Gulf of Guinea countries; and the establishment of effective customs and border-control systems throughout the subregion. It is also important to avoid the duplication of international capacity-building efforts with respect to maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. The G7++ and the Friends of the Gulf of Guinea groups have been serving as useful coordination platforms in this regard.

Finally and most importantly, the African Union is scheduled to hold an extraordinary summit on maritime security and development for Africa on 15 and 16 October in Lomé. We believe that the summit will provide a unique opportunity for the countries of the region to renew their commitment to jointly enhancing the maritime security architecture in the Gulf of Guinea.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

The Council has before it the text of a statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank Council members for their valuable contributions to the statement. In accordance with the understanding reached among the members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the Security Council agree to the statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2016/4.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I should like to welcome the initiative of the Chinese presidency to convene, together with the Senegalese and Angolan delegations, this debate to discuss a topic of great importance and scope in a global context characterized by key threats to our collective security. Quite clearly, the issue of privacy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea is a source of great concern to the countries of West and Central Africa, be they coastal or land-locked States. However, the issue necessarily has an unquestionable international dimension, given its underlying economic and geostrategic ramifications.

The Gulf of Guinea is among the regions of the world that best reflects the linkages among current global challenges. That part of the African continent's Atlantic coast is a crossroad of international maritime traffic owing to its location at the heart of networks of routes linking Africa, the Americas, Europe and Asia. However, above all the Gulf of Guinea is an area replete with diverse economic potential. Added to that are the many other resources of the continent, all of which attract the interest of both legal economic actors and the covetousness of criminals and traffickers of all types, who increasingly are developing various means that very often surpass the individual national capacities of the States of the region.

Reports available to us on this issue point to the fact that, over the past decade, the breadth of the phenomenon of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea has increased, thereby making it a significant obstacle to maritime activity by the countries of the region. Nonetheless, those activities significantly drive the economies of those countries. In recent years, the scope of organized maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea has expanded to a worrying degree, no longer being limited to the petroleum sector. Acts of piracy, at times taking the form of increasingly bold and sophisticated raids on the high seas, are now being compounded by armed robbery, illicit fishing, human trafficking and trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings, as well as in counterfeit medications and toxic waste. That further complicates the increasing efforts of the States of the region, with various international partners at their side. That is reflected in the various initiatives taken over the past five years in response to this challenge.

As appropriately mentioned by the Assistant Secretary-General, whom I thank for his briefing here today, a Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea was held at Yaoundé in June 2013 under the auspices of the three relevant subregional organizations. The meeting provided genuine momentum and was a tangible reflection of the collective commitment of the States of the region to address this growing threat. The process that led to the meeting illustrated the various stages of regional commitment and the international commitment underpinning it, including through the United Nations by way of the adoption of resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012), as well as presidential statement S/PRST/2013/13, which the Council adopted on the heels of the Yaoundé Summit.

The challenge before us is to establish and implement an institutional legal framework that will make it possible to undertake an effective, coordinated response by the countries of the region, as clearly emphasized at the Summit. Following the Summit, a package of stragic documents was adopted on the issue of maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea, including the Yaoundé Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of Central and West African States on Maritime Safety and Security in the their Common Maritime Domain, the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, and the memorandum of understanding among the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) on maritime safety and security in the Central and West Africa maritime space.

In view, on the one hand, of the progress made since the Council's previous meeting on this issue (see S/PV.6723) and, on the other hand, the situation on the ground, we have reason to be satisfied with the ongoing efforts of Gulf of Guinea States and subregional organizations, which have made substantial progress in the establishment of institutions and the adoption of legal frameworks on the security architecture for maritime security. For example, the GGC and ECOWAS finalized their regional maritime strategies, respectively in August 2013 and in March 2014, under the Yaoundé Declaration, which requested those entities

> "to develop and adopt a regional strategy on the fight against piracy, armed robbery and other illegal activities committed at sea, in line with the African Integrated Strategy for the Seas and Oceans 2050.

The Yaoundé process also is proceeding with the gradual implementation of the pillars of the interregional architecture on maritime safety and security that serve as the axes for the coordination and harmonization of regional policies and initiatives envisaged during the Summit. Moreover, it must be recognized that the operationalization of that architecture is based on certain conditions that have yet to be met, despite the achievements we have often emphasized. That pertains in particular to the strengthening of coordination and the harmonization of legislation on the subject, which in this configuration are made to both the interstate and interregional levels. Furthermore, we note the existence of barriers to the delicate question, not yet fully resolved, of the delimitation of maritime boundaries, which can be an element of tension in the relations among the various States bordering the Gulf.

In addition, funding is a central element in the effectiveness and the operation of the entire undertaking. It should therefore be noted that, in addition to the need to mobilize and pool the resources of Gulf of Guinea States and subregional organizations, the support of technical and financial partners is indispensable for the consolidation and the sustainability of the nascent integrated maritime safety systems. In that regard, it is appropriate to commend the assistance on the technical and financial fronts on the prat of partners at the bilateral and multilateral levels in support of State and regional initiatives against piracy and armed robbery. On that score we especially wish to acknowledge the contributions of the Special Trust Fund for Maritime Security in West and Central Africa, established by the International Maritime Organization.

In spite of the persistence of many challenges, regional mobilization in response to the threat posed by piracy and armed robbery at sea should be seen as a manifestation of the commitment of the States of the Gulf of Guinea to assume their responsibilities in the security sphere. Moreover, security in the region must be understood holistically, as the main causes and drivers of maritime insecurity are to be found on dry land. In truth, maritime crime is often fuelled by vast networks of illegal activities that are progressively being built on a foundation of poor governance, extreme poverty and socio-political violence. Therefore, we consider it essential to stress the links between piracy and transnational organized crime, given that this scourge is one of the major challenges that threaten the stability of countries in the region.

Moreover, given the particular security situation in West and Central Africa, we should consider seriously the possibility of the existence of connections between piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the financing of the activities of terrorist groups operating in the region. It is also essential to consider other issues related to maritime safety and security, including the management and control of marine resources.

In the fishing sector, pressure seems to be building on available fishery resources — due mainly to the increasing number of fishing vessels that are operating and to illegal fishing. We can see that the scarcity of fish stocks tends to push small-scale, traditional fishers to ignore maritime borders and national State legislation. All of those factors constitute potential sources of conflict. It is necessary to strengthen policies and partnerships for the rational exploitation of fishery resources and for the governance and sharing of transboundary marine resources, taking into account the specificities of the States.

It is because of those various but interlinked security issues that the second Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, held in 2015, devoted a plenary session to maritime safety. That session helped to facilitate strategic dialogue among the participants, to deepen their reflection on an integrated approach to threats on the continent, and to identify the most appropriate responses to current challenges. We are therefore of the view that the relevant guidelines arising from the Dakar Forum deserve to be endorsed by the African States and actively supported by the international community. I will mention just eight of most salient points:

First, the African approach must take into account, over and above security, the environmental, touristic and economic dimensions. Second, it is important to have an inclusive development policy that benefits communities, youth and women. Third, we must define the independent African priorities and the need for the support of international partners. Fourth, we must strengthen the legal and judicial capacities of States. Fifth, support must be given to programmes and institutions, not to mention the implementation of the Yaoundé process. Sixth, information should be collected and shared. Seventh, training and instruction on maritime issues are necessary. Finally, a maritime network should be created for a continental response and the development of a potential maritime surveillance and response.

As we can see, the dynamic is well under way on the African continent. Moreover, I reiterate that the African Union is preparing an extraordinary summit on maritime security, to be held in Lomé in October. The summit will, among other things, address the challenges and threats to maritime security, drug trafficking, money-laundering, illegal fishing and international cooperation. Senegal, of course, will participate in the meeting and actively work to ensure that it promotes a qualitative leap in the implementation process of a security architecture and operational maritime safety in Africa, and particularly in the Gulf of Guinea.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): Angola is very honoured to co-sponsor, with China and Senegal, this open debate on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. The insights provided by Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun were most valuable in outlining the subject matter we are considering in this important debate.

The Gulf of Guinea and waters beyond play a crucial strategic role in the Atlantic. They are at the centre of the main waterway connecting Europe and Africa and towards the western hemisphere. Historically, they were the key factor in the establishment in the sixteenth century of the first economic globalization, with deep-seated consequences. The roots of the problem we are discussing today — piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea — took hold in the region for a long period of time. In the pathway of world trade that fed the markets of the Americas with a labour force and supplied Europe with precious goods from the New World and from the East, piracy emerged at that time as a side effect of the intense trade across the region and as a very profitable economic activity, frequently sponsored by States.

Since that time, a strategic and organic link has been established between the two shores of the Atlantic. Centred in the Gulf of Guinea, it has gained renewed prominence in recent decades with the emergence in the region of security threats and transnational crime and criminality — a reality requiring an integrated and collective response from States bordering the South Atlantic. In fact, the countries of the eastern shore of the South Atlantic, besides being the source of transit of criminal activities, most notably drug trafficking, that resonate in the Gulf of Guinea and beyond, also face impending threats of the possible disruption of trade routes.

The Gulf of Guinea is the main access to the world for the countries at its shores, as well as for landlocked ones behind them, in access to the Atlantic for the import and export of goods and services. The seas of the Gulf of Guinea currently face serious security threats. Vulnerable maritime routes and porous land borders allow an increase in transnational crime, piracy, armed robbery, illegal fishing, human trafficking, illegal immigration, the smuggling of drugs and environmental crimes. In the current decade, such activities have caused enormous losses to the African maritime sector, hindering trade and the continent's development.

Given the complex ramifications of maritime insecurity, it is imperative that the international community mobilize and harmonize its efforts to find lasting solutions. By today's adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, on the issue of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, the Security Council is sending a strong signal of the international community's concern and resolve to address the threat posed by such a phenomenon to international navigation, security and the economic development of the countries of the region. With respect to the potential links with terrorists groups in West Africa and the Sahel, and the conditions necessary for the durable eradication of such a scourge — namely, the attainment of regional peace and security — we need to strengthen State institutions, promote economic and social development, respect human rights and the rule of law, and coordinate international assistance in support of national and regional efforts to assist Member States in addressing such threats.

Countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea have joined efforts. In 2009, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) adopted a maritime security strategy, establishing information-sharing, community surveillance and asset-management mechanisms, while strengthening national legal frameworks and training. ECCAS set up a Regional Centre for Maritime Security for Central Africa in Yaoundé, dividing its maritime space into zones and instituting joint patrols. However, the limited capacity of ECCAS to respond to the growing insecurity challenges remains a major constraint. In 2012, a new maritime zone was established under ECCAS supervision in order to upgrade the capacity to face the threat.

Angola, with a long maritime coast that is vital to its security and economic development, is deeply committed to the African Union 2050 Integrated Maritime Strategy. Designed to be operative until 2050, the strategy recognizes the potential of the maritime sector to promote economic development, boost trade and improve the living conditions of more than 700 million Africans in the continent. Through its representation in international maritime organizations, Angola has been actively involved in discussions and in the implementation of measures adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to enhance maritime security, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea.

Moreover, Angola has joined a number of arrangements dealing with the issue, including within the framework of ECCAS, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Southern African Development Community. Angola signed the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of Central and West Africa on Maritime Safety and Security in Their Common Maritime Domain. It is also a signatory State of the memorandum of understanding among ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission on maritime safety and security in Central and West Africa, and is a signatory to the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, adopted at Yaoundé. In line with resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012), in March 2015 Angola and the IMO organized a regional meeting to advance the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.

Still translating the importance it attaches to that issue, Angola organized, in cooperation with other partners, the International Conference on Maritime and Energy Security, in October 2015. The meeting focused on capacity-building and a holistic approach in implementing African maritime security strategies and highlighted the importance of integrated and complementary strategies among the countries of the region through sharing information and establishing closer regional and international cooperation. As the Conference's outcome, a declaration on maritime and energy security was adopted, in which the participants emphasized, inter alia, the importance of establishing partnerships at the regional and international levels, including technical assistance, training, joint exercises and the adoption of feasible strategies and plans of action.

Although tangible measures to enhance maritime security have been adopted, much more needs to be done by the countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea, which still face huge challenges. We believe that, by working in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity, it will be possible to overcome the challenges of piracy and other security threats affecting the Gulf of Guinea. Angola stands ready to work with countries of the region and with regional and international organizations towards such endeavours.

We are pleased to note the African Union's plan to hold an extraordinary summit on maritime security this year in Lomé with a view to establishing an African strategy on maritime security. Angola advocates and promotes the adoption of maritime security strategies consistent with the prevailing situation in the Gulf of Guinea and Southern Africa and in response to its international repercussions.

Finally, we are of the view that the Security Council's adoption of the presidential statement on peace consolidation in West Africa and on piracy and armed robbery at sea (S/PRST/2016/4) and the points of view expressed in this debate by the larger United Nations membership will positively resonate with the aspirations of the peoples of the region for well-being and development.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Ukraine welcomes the fact that the Security Council is considering piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea after some time, and we hope that today's meeting will provide additional impetus to the effective eradication of that problem. The insight provided by the Assistant Secretary-General is indeed very helpful in that regard. The subject of our discussion has a multifaceted nature, and it deserves our full attention, considering its social and economic implications, as well as legal complexities, coupled with safety and security impacts. There is no doubt that maritime piracy poses a threat to the international peace and security in West Africa. Therefore, the Security Council's addressing it constitutes an integral part of a comprehensive, cohesive and broad-based approach by the United Nations in dealing with this challenge.

While we fully align ourselves with the statement to be made later on behalf of the European Union, I would like to make the following points.

According to the International Maritime Bureau, West African waters are among the world's areas most affected by piracy and armed robbery at sea. Even if the recent official statistical data point to a decrease in the number of attacks in the area, this problem should not be underestimated, in particular considering that, given the information from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, ship owners tend to withhold reports on such accidents, owing to the risk of an increase in insurance policy premiums.

To elaborate credible mechanisms to curb the phenomenon, it is critical to differentiate between the forms that the threat takes off of the East and West coasts of the African continent. Unlike in the Gulf of Aden, the tactics of pirates in the Gulf of Guinea have evolved from attacking vessels on the high seas to relocating their activities to internal and territorial waters. Under those circumstances, international naval forces face a legal limitation on responding to such pirate attacks. At the same time, the authorities of coastal States are often unable, or unwilling, to effectively prosecute those responsible. It is in that unsettling context that for over a decade, pirates in the Gulf of Guinea have turned into well-armed and sophisticated criminal gangs with floating bases for their attacks.

Moreover, piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea have close ties with other perils threatening the region. The current situation of virtually uncontrolled crossings of maritime borders can be exploited by terrorist groups, as demonstrated by recent terrorist attacks in the West African region. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is, above all, an international problem that requires a coherent national approach on the part of each West African country.

We strongly believe that only consolidated efforts can put an end to piracy. In that regard, Ukraine calls upon the United Nations Member States to ensure full compliance with the Security Council resolutions and other documents related to the implementation of regional strategies for ensuring maritime security. Assistance to countries in the region in implementing an integrated strategy for maritime security, based on existing regional mechanisms for combating piracy and armed robbery at sea, should also be strongly promoted by both the Security Council and the competent United Nations bodies and agencies.

Since all coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea are members of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), we see particular value in the further fulfilment by the IMO of its strategy for implementing sustainable maritime security measures in West and Central Africa. We also consider it necessary to expand the scope of international assistance programmes to strengthen the capacity of countries in the region to ensure maritime security, improve infrastructure and carry out effective joint actions to monitor the situation and conduct joint patrols at sea. That requires improved coordination among the United Nations, regional countries and regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission in combating piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has a direct bearing on Ukraine. In 2015, pirates abducted two Ukrainian citizens and demanded ransom for their release. Just a month ago, on 26 March, pirates captured two other citizens of Ukraine, the captain and assistant captain of the vessel *Sampatiki*. Unfortunately, negotiations with pirates on their release are still under way, and they continue to suffer in captivity.

In the light of the outbreak of piracy, the issues of crew protection in the shipping industry and post-accident treatment for piracy survivors continue to be a matter of most serious concern to us. In order to mitigate the impact of modern piracy, it is important that Governments, ship owners, insurers and all other stakeholders in maritime commerce treat seafarers as their true and genuine social partners. That requires a fresh look into the problems related to post-conflict rehabilitation and compensation for moral damage and material loses, as well as the recovery of physical and mental strength and health. In many cases, seafarers released after being held captive by pirates are left to deal with their problems on their own. A solution depends on different factors, such as the quality of the seafarers' employment agreements, the modalities of justice with regard to protecting the rights of labourers, and the accessibility and quality of medical and social assistance.

In that regard, Ukraine would like to call on United Nations States Members to expedite the universalization of the amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, approved by the International Labour Conference in 2014. The proper implementation of that instrument will allow for the further elaboration of possible solutions for seafarers and fishers who are victims of piracy. We also believe that the primary responsibility of flag States for ensuring the effective implementation and enforcement of international instruments related to maritime security and safety, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as for bringing those guilty of acts of piracy or armed robbery of ships to account, should be further strengthened.

When a person responsible for acts of piracy or armed robbery at sea enjoys impunity, the anti-piracy efforts of the international community are undermined. Ensuring the prosecution and incarceration of captured pirates must remain a priority if we are truly committed to eradicating this evil. Effective international mechanisms for bringing perpetrators to justice and enhanced national criminal prosecution procedures are needed. In that regard, Ukraine would like to recall its initiative of 2010, which was circulated as General Assembly document A/65/489 under agenda item 74, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea", namely, the draft comprehensive convention on the suppression of acts of piracy at sea. We invite all Member States to look afresh at that proposal in the light of our debate.

Combating piracy and armed robbery at sea by military means is an effective, but not the only, tool in fighting this scourge. Developing a comprehensive strategy of appropriate assistance to the countries of the region to eliminate the root causes of maritime crimes in West Africa — such as poverty, high unemployment, a lack of rule of law, poor law enforcement and a lack of the capabilities to effectively govern territorial waters and promote economic development — could make a substantial contribution to the global efforts to solve the problem of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea.

All the relevant United Nations bodies must be actively involved in shaping a comprehensive approach to address the issue of piracy. In our view, the division of tasks could take the following form. The General Assembly could address the social and economic aspects of piracy, while the Security Council could address its security and military aspects, thereby making full use of the tools available to the United Nations.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing this morning.

A single statistic suffices to explain the timeliness of this debate: more than 20 per cent of maritime crime takes place in the Gulf of Guinea — in all its guises, from piracy and armed robbery to all forms of illegal trafficking. In addition, from last year to the first few months of this year, we have witnessed an increase in attacks in that maritime zone. In 2015 there were 48 attacks and 33 boardings, and thus far in 2016 there have been 30 attacks, 73 per cent of which took place just off the coast of Nigeria. Those figures, however, are just the tip of the iceberg because it is believed that only half of such incidents are actually reported.

The amount of maritime traffic in that area means that this poses a serious threat not just for Africa but also for global security. The Security Council grasped that point in its resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012). Off the back of those two resolutions, in 2013 the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea took place in Yaoundé, which laid the foundation for a maritime security architecture in the Gulf of Guinea. The Yaoundé Summit also recognized that the main players in that architecture needed to be not just the signatory States, but also the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission.

The Yaoundé process, as the development of the agreements at the Yaoundé Summit is known, has the support of the international community as a whole, including of the United Nations, the European Union and the Group of Seven Plus Friends of the Gulf of Guinea. The participation of Spain in those three forums is ongoing and very active. It is complemented by intensive bilateral activity with neighbouring countries on maritime safety. We work with them closely in providing training, capacity-building and police and customs cooperation, among other things. The Spanish support is the result not just of our physical and historical proximity to the region, but to a firm commitment to peace, security and development in the African continent, as expressed by His Majesty King Felipe in January 2015 in Addis Ababa when addressing the annual session of the African Union.

Despite the initial vigour in the direct aftermath of the Yaoundé Summit and the international mobilization that accompanied it, the truth is that much needs to be done, as is proved by the annual figures on the number of incidents of maritime crime. It is essential that cooperation among the countries of the region and among interregional organizations run more smoothly. Similarly, the principle of ownership is not yet fully assumed by many of the coastal States, and the differences among their legal systems means that legal and police cooperation is further hampered. With regard to the valuable concept of ownership, we should commend such inititives as the conference on maritime safety and energy that took place in Luanda in October 2015. The Luanda Declaration reiterates the important need for a comprehensive and integrated African maritime security strategy and the need to prioritize partnerships in Africa that promote regional organizations.

Apart from the issue of ownership, Spain is also a supporter of a global approach. That means not just clamping down on attacks committed at sea, but also working to prevent them while addressing the root causes thereof, such as endemic poverty and insecurity. There is no problem at sea that does not have its root cause on dry land. For that reason, we believe that today's debate is extremely timely, as it gives us an important opportunity as the Security Council to send a clear message and signal of support to the African Union initiative to hold an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on maritime security next October.

Finally, Spain aligns itself with the statement that the observer of the European Union will deliver later.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): First, let me thank you, Mr. President, for having taking the initiative to convene this important debate on a matter of great concern for France. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his very instructive briefing.

France also associates itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union. I would like to focus on three points.

First, the security, economic and political challenges related to maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea are major ones — for the region, for strategic partners and for the international community as a whole. The statistics speak for themselves. These maritime zones extend over 6,000 kilometres of coastal area, from Senegal to Angola. The Gulf of Guinea hosts one of the largest offshore oil fields of planet, with an estimated reserves of 24 billion barrels. That represents about 5 per cent of global reserves. For 10 years, more than 600 attacks have been registered against vessels on the high seas or in the territorial waters of coastal States. While the number of attacks declined in 2015, due in great in part to the mobilization of States in the region, the threat level remains high, as evidenced by the upsurge in acts of piracy since January of this year. Trafficking in narcotics leads to the transfer from South America to Europe of 20 to 40 tons of cocaine per year through the Gulf of Guinea, with an estimated sale price of €1.3 billion. Those are just a few examples.

The second point I want to emphasize is the mobilization of the States in the region. Resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012) call on States of the Gulf of Guinea to develop tools, capabilities and policies to eradicate the growing maritime insecurity in the region. States have responded to that call. The Heads of State of the riparian countries and the heads of regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission demonstrated clear political will to fight maritime insecurity at the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, held in Yaoundé in June 2013. At the Summit, they adopted the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa and decided to establish the Interregional Coordination Centre. The latter, inaugurated in September 2014, is meant to sit at the top of a new interregional maritime security architecture, and everything must be done to enable the Centre to fulfil its role. The African Union Summit to be held in Lomé in October and the planned adoption on that occasion of an African Union charter on maritime safety and security and economic and social development will be essential in that regard. Those are very positive developments and efforts that should be commended. France encourages the States of the Gulf of Guinea to continue along that path. And, as we did during the 2013 Sommet de l'Elysée pour la Paix et la Sécurité en Afrique, France continues to support the Yaoundé process, which we hope will become operational as soon as possible.

Finally, France's strategy in the Gulf of Guinea aims to support the initiative of the countries of West and Central Africa. As members know, France is one of the main supporters of the States of the region in their fight against maritime insecurity. France has been present in the area for 25 years, through Mission Corymbe and cooperation in the area of security and defence. Since 2011 — and until 2021 — the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security Sector Reform Support project bolsters maritime security sector reform in the Gulf of Guinea. To ensure the consistency of French initiatives with the States of the region, a French support plan for securing maritime areas in the Gulf of Guinea has been developed. France also promotes maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea within international organizations. France has actively participated in the development of a European strategy for the Gulf of Guinea, which was adopted in March 2014, as well as a European action plan, which was approved in March 2015.

In conclusion, in France's view, the strengthening of local capacities and support for regional coordination are the principles that should guide international efforts in that region of the world. That approach is based on respect for the sovereignty of the States of the region, national ownership of solutions and, finally, the need to ensure compliance with the law of the sea and the freedom of maritime traffic. Presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, which we adopted today, fully reflects that approach.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate and for bringing to our attention, together with Angola and Senegal, the important topic of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf Guinea. I also thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Zerihoun, for his briefing. We share his concerns, as well as those set out in the concept note (S/2016/321, annex) circulated by the Chinese presidency.

Today's open debate provides us with an opportunity to re-examine our past efforts to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea within the context of the current dynamics and threat of terror groups operating in the region. It should enable us to strengthen our resolve and to step up measures in our fight against organized crime and terror groups that find in piracy on the high seas a lucrative source of income with which to fund their terror network of criminal activities.

As a whole, piracy remains a major concern due to its disruptive impact on trade. Given their regional network, organized crime and terror groups pose a challenge that affects the security and economies of countries in the region. Piracy creates regional maritime insecurity that affects the livelihoods of the peoples in the region. Hence, combating piracy will require better coordination, a well-calibrated regional and national strategy and international support. It will also require the sharing of intelligence on terror networks operating on land, as well as efforts to cripple their operations on the high seas.

In today's debate, Malaysia will focus on the need for a comprehensive integrated approach to maritime security and the importance of enhanced coordination among the affected States and regional organizations. Malaysia fully supports the region-led maritime security initiative outlined in the concept note, and encourages the international community to actively support the initiative. As such, we welcome the various efforts made by the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States, the African Union, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the States concerned to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and to strengthen their maritime security and cooperation. Any regional cooperation, however, should not impinge upon the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the States concerned, nor jeopardize their national security. We fully support the sovereign rights of those States to determine the best means to exploit natural resources in their economic zones, including fisheries, in accordance with international law.

We wish to emphasize the importance of approaching this issue in a holistic manner, focusing simultaneously on security, the rule of law and development. In our view, working collectively and ensuring a balanced and coherent strategy that addresses not only the root causes but also the symptoms of piracy and armed robbery is fundamental to address the issue in the long term. Lessons learned and best practices on maritime security and combating piracy and criminal activities at sea should be encouraged and regularly shared by the regional organizations and the affected States with a view to achieving the needed maritime security and addressing constraints in resources and assets. In that regard, we look forward to the holding of the African Union extraordinary summit on maritime security and safety and development in Africa in late 2016.

It is our view that, through the IMO, the United Nations plays an important coordinating role and should continue, and intensify, its engagement when requested to assist the States and organizations of the region to act and mobilize international support. Studies have shown that piracy and armed robbery at sea are among the criminal indicators of economic constraints. In that regard, we believe that, in developing regional cooperation on maritime security, it is crucial to incorporate funding and support for homegrown solutions such as socioeconomic programming, the rebuilding of infrastructure and the creation of employment opportunities, especially for youth.

Sharing Malaysia's own experience, it has stepped up measures in line with its responsibility of ensuring that its maritime zones, including the Strait of Malacca, are safe and secure for navigation. As the shortest sea route connecting the dynamic economies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and East Asia region with the West, any form of disruption, including piracy and armed robbery of shipping traffic in the Strait, would have huge consequences on the global trade and economy, as well as on the socioeconomic well-being of the States concerned. In addition to physical presence and electronic monitoring capabilities, Malaysia, together with the States concerned, constantly undertakes coordinated patrols in the Strait of Malacca. Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore launched coordinated patrols in the Malacca Strait in 2004. With the implementation of those patrols, comprehensive arrangements for maritime security in the Strait of Malacca has been achieved. All of those efforts, either unilaterally or in cooperation with the other States concerned, contribute to the overall improvement of the maritime security situation in the Strait of Malacca.

Those successful efforts have been acknowledged by reports worldwide, in particular the weekly piracy report of the International Maritime Bureau, and annual reports. The declassification of the Strait as a high-risk zone by the Joint War Committee of Lloyd's Market Association in August 2006 was another example of the fruitful outcome of the collective efforts by Malaysia and the other States concerned to ensure that the security of maritime navigation in the Strait of Malacca is successfully safeguarded.

Given that over 90 per cent of the imports and exports of African States are conducted by sea, there can be no doubt of the crucial need to ensure a safe and secure maritime environment for the sustainable development of the African States concerned. To that end, presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, which we have just adopted today, serves as another manifestation of the Council's continued support in the fight against the threat of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea.

For its part, Malaysia stands ready to assist in sharing its experiences with the affected States to the best of its ability.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand commends China for convening this debate. We acknowledge Senegal and Angola for ensuring this important issue receives the Council's sustained attention. We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his briefing.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is a serious drag on the economic development of the countries of the region and a serious threat to regional and international peace and security.

New Zealand is a maritime nation that exports to the world. Around 99 per cent of our trade by volume is carried by merchant shipping. As such we understand the importance of effective maritime security to our well-being, as well as to the stability of our region. As highlighted by our Minister for Foreign Affairs during last year's open debate on the challenges facing small island developing States (see S/PV.7469), we are a Pacific country with a significant stake in the peace and security of small island developing states in our region. Many of the vulnerabilities that are faced by countries in the Gulf of Guinea are similar to those that small island developing States encounter in the Pacific and elsewhere. Their capacity limitations make them a target for transnational criminal networks, including those involved in piracy.

One of the things we have learned from our region in dealing with transnational organized crime is the crucial importance of effective cooperation and coordination between countries. Without this, criminal networks will simply move on and exploit the weakest link — those States that are least able to monitor and take enforcement action against crimes committed at sea. Such cooperation must also extend internationally. The Royal New Zealand Navy frigates *Te Mana* and *Te Kaha* have participated in a multinational operations focused on counter-piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the eastern coast of Somalia. The Royal New Zealand Air Force has also participated in NATO's counter-piracy operation Ocean Shield. Last year, we also worked closely with a number of West African countries to share information on vessels that had been involved in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the

Southern Ocean. This cooperation with West African coastal States was highly appreciated.

We recognize, of course, that the scale of the problem in the Gulf of Guinea is much greater than any that has so far arisen in our region. It is deep seated and pervasive, and it threatens not only the economies and security of the smaller States, but is also a major threat to the peace and stability of larger nations, including even Nigeria. Piracy prospers where onshore governance is weak and the capacity of local authorities to monitor and maintain control over their maritime territories is limited. It is able to flourish because the pirates at sea have collaborators and collusionists on land. In that sense, piracy degrades the cohesion and stability of coastal States by undermining governance, exacerbating instability and hampering development.

As we have said many times before in this Chamber, prevention is better than cure. In addition to enhancing security responses to criminal activities at sea, we need to address some of the roots causes of those issues. One area that warrants particular attention is to ensure that coastal States can maximize the benefits from their natural resource bases, both at sea and on land, to ensure that people are able to make meaningful contributions to their own and their countries' economic prosperity. This requires strong institutions, effective regulatory frameworks and strong political will. The inverse situation inhibits sustainable economic development and propels the marginalized to consider other options for economic survival, such as criminal activity.

In the Gulf of Guinea, much of the piracy problem has its roots in the long-standing grievances of marginalized groups in the Niger Delta and in the insidious links that have emerged between local insurgencies and cross-border criminal activity, particularly oil smuggling. To enjoy success in the long term, counter-piracy efforts must be part of a more comprehensive approach to addressing the drivers of criminality and instability.

As we learned in Somalia and elsewhere, it is vital that the necessary national and legal frameworks be in place to enable effective prosecution of those directly and indirectly involved in piracy. This means ensuring that countries of the region have the right legislation to prosecute and punish those who are apprehended, and this is backed by the necessary will at the senior levels of Government to take these steps. It also requires frameworks for operational and legal cooperation.

Within the Gulf of Guinea, there are a number of subregional bodies playing a positive role in tackling piracy at sea, including the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. We encourage further progress to operationalize the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, in Yaoundé. This is an important step towards a joint regional response to addressing maritime security, including incidents of piracy at sea in what, as others have said, is a vast geographic area.

Finally, the Council can provide an ongoing international focus in support of the regional efforts. For this reason, New Zealand is a strong supporter of presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, which was adopted today.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Chinese presidency and the delegations of Senegal and Angola for convening this important open debate. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Zerihoun, for his briefing.

It is important to remind the international community of the phenomenon of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and their dangerous security and socioeconomic implications. It is a true threat to international trade and it negatively affects stability and development in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea and West Africa.

Despite the partial decrease in the prevalence of this phenomenon, there is no time for complacency. Criminal networks continue to operate with their basic capacities. Egypt values the efforts of the countries of the region to combat this phenomenon, which include the holding of the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea in Yaoundé in 2013, with the participation of 25 countries. The Summit adopted the Yaoundé Declaration on combatting piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. It also endorsed the creation of the Interregional Coordination Centre on Maritime Safety and Security for Central and West Africa.

We also should not ignore the important role of the African Union and other regional organizations, including the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. We look forward to the extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union of Maritime Security and Development in Africa, which will be held in Lomé in October. Its outcomes will definitely contribute to African cooperation in that regard.

If anti-piracy efforts are to be successful, we must support national efforts to protect the coastlines and to strengthen cooperation, information-sharing and lessons learned at the regional and international levels. It is also important to ensure that the shipping industry is committed to best practices when sailing in high-risk areas. Furthermore, it is important to combat impunity by prosecuting people involved in acts of piracy and by tracking the leaders and people who finance piracy networks.

In that regard, Egypt would like to stress the importance of taking into consideration the different political and security conditions and the different modus operandi of pirates from one region to another. Networks of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia have taken advantage of the absence of State authority for two decades and established a base to launch their attacks and seize ships and their crew for ransom. However, the perpetrators of acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea have adopted a different approach. They have seized ships and their cargo passing through the region. There is no doubt that combatting these different modus operandi require differentiated approaches.

Egypt would like to stress that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is the legal framework for combating acts of piracy. It is important for all States to uphold their responsibilities under the Convention, in particular to prosecute persons suspected of being involved in acts of piracy. It is also important to delineate high-risk zones that have seen an increase in acts of piracy. It is important to delineate such zones according to specific and clear criteria in order to ensure the best use of resources in the fight against piracy. These resources should be allocated to regions that are experiencing the highest levels of piracy. Egypt also stresses the need for the international community, especially through the International Maritime Organization, to hold open consultations with the participation of all parties to promulgate regulations that allow for the use of security personnel aboard commercial ships.

In conclusion, human and natural resources on the African continent, if appropriately exploited, could ensure the well-being and stability of the peoples of Africa, while contributing positively to the international economy. The African Union has adopted the 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy, which is an ambitious development vision aimed at strengthening security in the African maritime space and at using to good advantage the African coasts in mining, fishing and trade, without damaging the ecosystem and maritime life. The Strategy also aims at developing the infrastructure of African ports and promoting true complementarity between landlocked and coastal countries.

Nevertheless, Africa is facing a number of challenges that prevent it from occupying the place it deserves. There is a link between these challenges. Poverty and underdevelopment are fuelling armed conflicts and undermining State authority, thereby leading to the proliferation of terrorist networks, transnational organized crime, smuggling and piracy. Therefore, in order to address many of the challenges that the African continent is facing, it is important to make a clear diagnosis of the root causes of the problem.

The international community should support African efforts to find timely solutions, including security cooperation in the areas of piracy, organized crime and terrorism. It is also necessary to strengthen long-term programmes aimed at achieving sustainable development and combating poverty in Africa. The Security Council and the United Nations should also follow up on international efforts to strengthen the capacity of countries of the region to combat piracy. It is also necessary to ensure continued financial and technical support and determine the strengths and weaknesses of current mechanisms in order to develop them appropriately.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I would like to thank China, Angola and Senegal for organizing today's important debate. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his briefing. We fully support his efforts to assist the States of the region to combat piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea.

Earlier this month, on 11 April at 7.56 p.m., pirates attacked a cargo vessel off the coast of Nigeria. They had waited for darkness before ambushing the vessel and boarded with force. The captain and crew sounded the alarm and hid in a protected space on the ship, only to discover when they emerged the following day that two of their crew were missing — a second officer from the Philippines and an electrician from Egypt. Both are still missing.

This is not the first pirate attack of the year, nor even the first attack that day. Earlier on 11 April, the very same day, pirates had attacked a Turkish cargo ship off the coast of Nigeria, kidnapping six of the crew, including the vessel's captain. Those men are also still missing. Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea are increasing at an alarming rate, with some industry experts recording at least 32 attacks off the coast of Nigeria alone in 2016, affecting many Member States, including the United States. The economic consequences for the people of the region are devastating. According to a Chatham House report, as much as 400,000 barrels of crude oil are stolen each day in the Gulf of Guinea. By some estimates, Nigeria is losing about $1.5 billion a month due to piracy, armed robbery at sea, smuggling and fuel supply fraud. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing also generates a sizable income loss in the hundreds of millions of dollars a year for many countries and communities that depend on that sector to survive.

We have spoken many times in this Chamber about the root causes of piracy: ineffective governance structures, weak rule of law, precarious legal frameworks and inadequate naval, coast-guard and maritime law enforcement. The absence of an effective maritime-governance system, in particular, hampers freedom of movement in the region, disrupts trade and economic growth, and facilitates environmental crimes. We have also acknowledged in our resolutions and in the presidential statement adopted this morning (S/PRST/2016/4) that the solution to these root causes lies in greater African stewardship of maritime safety and security at the continental, regional and Member State level.

Strong political will from African Governments and leaders is needed to pursue and prosecute crimes at all levels within criminal enterprises. Maritime crime flourishes under ineffective or complicit governance structures, but is diminished when rule of law is effective. Absent African ownership and action from national and local Governments to tackle maritime security challenges, there is little reason to believe that attacks in the Gulf of Guinea will decline. International cooperation and integration among regional countries, international organizations, industry and other entities that have a stake in maritime security are also critical to ensuring the full range of lawful and timely actions to combat piracy and other maritime crime in the Gulf of Guinea.

In this regard, we welcome the Yaoundé Summit documents, which articulated a comprehensive view of maritime safety and security, including combating illegal fishing, trafficking of arms, people and drugs, and maritime pollution. We commend the United Nations Regional Offices for West Africa and Central Africa for providing capacity-building and technical assistance to Governments in the region, as well as subregional organizations, including the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We urge the Member States of the regional and subregional organizations to make the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea fully operational.

In this context, the United States is doing its part to support the efforts of our African partners in the Gulf of Guinea. Our approach is based on three guiding principles: the prevention of attacks, the response to acts of maritime crime, and enhancing maritime security and governance.

On prevention, we are supporting the efforts of ECOWAS and ECCAS to strengthen regional maritime strategies, including the completion of their memorandum of understanding and Code of Conduct for Central and West Africa. We are also encouraging nations to fully implement the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and the African Union 2050 Integrated Maritime Strategy. We encourage States of the region to further enhance security by establishing Maritime Pilot Zone E, covering the coasts of Nigeria, the Niger, Benin and Togo — an area where the majority of attacks occur. Establishing Zone E would provide the means for an integrated approach to coordinating joint patrols, naval drills, training programmes and intelligence-sharing among the naval forces of countries in the Zone.

In responding to acts of maritime crime, the United States trains, equips and conducts exercises and operations with African maritime forces through our Africa Partnership Station. One month ago, the Station held a multinational maritime exercise in which the Gulf of Guinea, European and South American nations worked together, shared information and refined their tactics, techniques and procedures to monitor and enforce their territorial waters and exclusive economic zones in the Gulf of Guinea. Through our African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership, we are also improving partner capacity to conduct maritime security operations off the coasts of Senegal, Cape Verde, Ghana and Cameroon.

To enhance maritime security and governance, the United States is assisting in strengthening the judicial sectors of Gulf of Guinea nations and regional capacity to address impunity for piracy and related maritime crime, such as our support for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Technical assistance helps those countries put in place the criminal laws necessary to effectively prosecute armed robbery at sea and piracy cases.

In closing, I would like to underscore the importance of a comprehensive regional approach to addressing maritime insecurity. A comprehensive approach will help reduce the loss of national revenue, support socioeconomic development and expand environmental protection in the region. We look forward to supporting the plenary meeting of the Group of Seven Plus Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, to held in Lisbon in June, as well as Togo's hosting of the 2016 African Union Maritime Security Summit in October. The United States sees those engagements as an opportunity to produce concrete timelines and actions to help form a robust national, regional and global response to maritime security threats across Africa.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay welcomes the convening of today's open debate and the concept note (S/2016/321, annex) that was distributed by the President's delegation in a timely manner.

We also thank Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his in-depth briefing to the Council on the issue. My delegation also highly welcomes the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, on the matter under consideration today.

In 1986, General Assembly resolution 41/11 created the zone of peace and co-operation of the South Atlantic, of which Uruguay currently holds the position of president pro tempore. All coastal States of both the African and South American coasts of the South Atlantic take part in the zone. In the outcome document of the seventh ministerial meeting that took place in January 2013, paragraphs 108 through 110 of the Montevideo declaration contain specific provisions regarding combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, which we decided needed to be mentioned in today's presidential, statement, which we support. The States members of the South Atlantic zone remain ready to support the Gulf of Guinea countries in any way they may seek.

Uruguay wishes to highlight the key role played by the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States, which have combined their anti-piracy efforts and coordinated their security policy. Nonetheless, we must be aware that those efforts have fallen short. The growth of criminal networks engaged in piracy and armed robbery at sea has benefitted from the weaknesses of States in terms of their maritime capacities and ability to punish those who perpetrate crimes. That is why maritime security measures to enhance the presence of those nations at sea will be critical in the short term. However, to achieve a long-term solution, we must address the root causes of the problems in the countries of the region and acknowledge the fact that piracy is only a symptom of a deeper problem.

At the heart of piracy lie such structural causes as poverty, unemployment, unequal wealth distribution and the challenges posed by organized crime, trafficking in arms, drugs and persons, pollution, illegal fishing and the ever-increasing presence of extremist groups. Uruguay therefore believes that in order to tackle piracy, we must simultaneously reinforce actions for institution-building in the region. The Gulf of Guinea is one of the most unsafe maritime areas in the world and requires targeted responses, given the resources available to those involved in piracy.

It is worth noting that at least half of all incidents are not reported and therefore not recorded in the annual reports of the International Maritime Bureau. It seems clear that the response to such crime requires the international community to display the same involvement and commitment that it has shown in the fight against a similar scourge in the Indian Ocean, which has been very successful. Without a strong naval presence of States in the Gulf of Guinea, we can only look forward to an endless continuous increase in maritime crime and piracy, with an impact on countries that today are currently least affected, risking further destabilization in the region. It is therefore essential that the multilateral system, especially the United Nations, play a key role in combating piracy and in supporting the countries of West Africa in meeting the challenges posed by piracy. We underscore that piracy is a global phenomenon and therefore requires a global response.

Finally, I stress the relevance of the Security Council and the international community response to the issue of piracy from various angles, including the mission carried out by the Council last month to Mali, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, where we made it clear that the only way of delivering peace and stability in Western Africa is through a frank and open dialogue in which the United Nations plays a part.

Mr. Mizushima (Japan): Japan highly appreciates the initiative taken by China, Angola and Senegal in convening this important meeting. I would also like to join others in thanking Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his informative briefing. Japan also welcomes the adoption of the presidential statement on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea (S/PRST/2016/4).

Since ancient times, humankind has benefited from the many blessings that the sea provides and maritime transportation has connected the world. It is our significant common interest to maintain a maritime order based upon the universally recognized principles of international law.

Piracy is a threat to the safety of sea lanes around the world, and countering piracy is an issue vital to all of us as we benefit from maritime trade. The international community as a whole should address that issue. For its part, Japan has actively contributed to the maintenance and stability of maritime order, including through efforts to counter piracy and armed robbery in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore and off the coast of Somalia. We have seen a substantial drop in the number of piracy cases off the coast of Somalia recently; however, that of the Gulf of Guinea remains high.

Resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012) have played an important role in raising international awareness about the issue of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. Since 2012, the Group of Seven (G-7) has stressed the importance of the issue. The Group of Seven Foreign Ministers, in their statement on maritime security issued earlier this month, expressed their determination to cooperate through capacity-building assistance in the area of maritime security and safety in order to help coastal States deal with their own vulnerabilities. They also recognized the importance of the framework of the G7++ Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, within which the countries concerned, together with international organizations and the shipping industry, exchange views about regional challenges and needs.

We believe that coastal countries should have primary responsibility for addressing issues in the Gulf of Guinea, including through such regional frameworks as the Yaoundé Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa. On the other hand, the funds and manpower are lacking for implementing the Code of Conduct and the maritime security strategies of the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States. It is therefore important that the international community support the efforts of regional frameworks and countries to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea in the region.

In that regard, Japan is supporting projects for the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, making the largest contribution to the International Maritime Organization's West and Central Africa Maritime Security Trust Fund. In December, Japan also provided equipment and materials to the Regional Academy of Maritime Sciences and Technologies in Abidjan, with the aim of enhancing navigation technology and maritime safety capacity for its students, and thereby creating synergy with the assistance that France is providing to the Interregional Maritime Security Institute in Côte d'Ivoire. Japan is also considering providing assistance to enable an extraordinary African Union summit on maritime security and safety and development in Africa to be held in Lomé in October.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Japan's determination to work to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, together with the international community, including the Security Council. Japan will also focus on the issue at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which this year will be held in Africa for the first time, in Kenya in August.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom) (*spoke in Chinese*): Like other speakers today, Mr. President, I would like to welcome your leadership on this issue, and I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

(*spoke in English*)

As my United States colleague mentioned earlier, two ships were attacked off the coast of Nigeria earlier this month. I would like to echo her concern about the crew members who were kidnapped that day and to call for their release. Those two ships were flagged to Malta and Liberia; their cargo came from Turkey, Greece and Nigeria; and the eight crew members whom we just heard about came from Egypt, the Philippines and Turkey. So on just one day on the seas off West Africa, piracy struck at the people, property and prosperity of seven Members of the United Nations. It should concern us all that there were around 100 similar incidents in the Gulf of Guinea last year. It does not take a mathematician to see that the damage done by those acts is not isolated in a far-off place, far removed from the Security Council's attention. Such attacks strike at the interests of all of us and therefore require each of us to focus on them.

When the security of shipping and global trade is threatened in this way, the prosperity and stability of the regional States of West and Central Africa are threatened, as is the security of their peoples. That threat can and must be tackled together, through regional leadership and coordinated international support.

The United Kingdom commends the efforts that the region has been making so far. We fully support the Yaoundé Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa. We welcome the commitment shown by the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission and their members. That commitment is seen in their efforts to develop a regional framework for countering piracy and armed robbery at sea. Such a framework will allow the sharing of information and the coordination of operations needed to make a real difference on the seas in the Gulf.

But a framework is just a start. We urge those bodies and their members to continue their efforts to establish and fully operationalize the regional network of maritime coordination centres, which include the Interregional Coordination Centre in Yaoundé, the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa in Pointe-Noire in the Republic of the Congo, and the Regional Centre for Maritime Safety in West Africa in Abidjan.

The United Kingdom is also playing its part. Our resources and diplomatic efforts to tackle this threat are carefully coordinated with the Gulf of Guinea region, the maritime industry, the European Union and other partners. We are an active member of the Group of Seven Plus Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, which is meeting again soon and is a valuable forum for experts from regional States and donor countries to coordinate and deploy our resources. We look forward to the next meeting, to be held under Portugal's chairmanship.

We recognize, however, that coordination alone will not solve the problem. That is why the United Kingdom is making concerted efforts to assist in building maritime capacity across the region. We are helping to mentor maritime police and navy units in Ghana and Sao Tome and Principe, and we are building port facilities in Sierra Leone to provide a platform for maritime law-enforcement operations. We have enhanced the region's capacity through our contributions to the International Maritime Organization's West and Central Africa Maritime Security Trust Fund.

Improving regional coordination and building maritime capacity to stop the pirates are the first steps of the process. What comes next is just as important: investigations and prosecutions. The knowledge that there are long-term consequences to choosing a life of piracy is the best way to deter those who might follow this path. That is why we support bolstering the rule-of-law capacity in the States of the region and why we are currently considering other ways to develop the region's ability to prosecute those involved in maritime crime.

Through such steps and more, we know we can make a difference. The incidence of hijackings for cargo is falling, but the battle is not yet won. The first quarter of this year has seen a marked increase in the number of kidnaps for ransom. I would therefore like to close by returning to the issue of the two ships attacked earlier this month — the tanker *Puli* and the container ship *Turquoise*. Together they lost eight crewmen in those attacks. They are still missing, and their families and friends are still fearful for their safety. As we debate today how best to tackle this problem, we should do so with all those sailors in mind.

Mr. Méndez Graterol (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing on the challenges that the security situation in the Gulf of Guinea poses to peacebuilding. I would also like to congratulate the Council presidency and the delegations of Angola and Senegal for promoting today's discussion of an issue of such importance for peace and security in West and Central Africa, particularly the coastal countries on the Gulf of Guinea. We believe that the Council's adoption of a presidential statement on the subject (S/PRST/2016/4) in the framework of this open debate is very important, as it emphasizes its commitment to keeping a watchful eye on developments in the Gulf of Guinea and in West and Central Africa as a whole.

The coastal region of the Gulf of Guinea and the States there have been affected by the threat of piracy, transnational organized crime, the trafficking and illicit use of natural resources such as oil and gas, illegal fishing and trafficking in drugs and persons, all promoted by criminal networks that have appreciably affected economic growth. This has had a negative impact on society, threatening the stability of the countries of the subregion as well. This situation must serve to mobilize international cooperation in support of those States to address this issue.

The attention being accorded to this issue by the Security Council, following the adoption of resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012), is as pertinent as ever, given the threat posed to the stability of countries and peoples by the penetration and action of criminal groups that threaten the achievements of that African subregion in development and the strengthening of political stability.

Venezuela appreciates the peacebuilding process taking place in Africa, which is of great importance to the work of the United Nations and regional and subregional bodies that undertake them, both because they represent a fundamental step towards achieving sustainable and inclusive development in the region, and because of their credibility and trust palced in them by their peoples. It is therefore an inescapable responsibility to promote all initiatives that pave the way towards strengthening and promoting such efforts in the social, economic and political spheres, as well as in the field of security.

In this context, we recognize the efforts of the States of the subregion of the Gulf of Guinea, with the support of the international community, to coordinate, through multiple initiatives and specific programmes, the implementation of a strategy to counter piracy and armed robbery. I highlight in particular the work of the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Maritime Organization for West and Central Africa, and the specific efforts of the maritime strategy of the African Union, which have institutionalized the joint response to the regional challenge.

Similarly, we strongly support the trust fund established by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to strengthen the institutional capacities of the States of the region. We recognize the technical, operational, logistical and legal assistance provided by the IMO to coastal States of the region, which has been broad and important to the implementation of a coordinated subregional strategy in various fields related to commercial navigation, port security, and professional training and safety, thereby encouraging the participation of all stakeholders. Such cooperation, led by States, is a point of reference to consider in addressing security issues in Africa.

Similarly, we reaffirm the need for sustainable financing methods for all public and private institutional initiatives, with emphasis on the tasks of inclusive social development that address the local needs of the people of the region. Compliance with financial commitments undertaken by various partners, particularly international organizations and countries, is urgent in order to successfully complete the proposed projects, and in that sense we call for them to be addressed in a comprehensive and timely manner.

Meeting the challenge of creating and strengthening State post-conflict capacities is the essence of sustainable peace, and all initiatives undertaken to address the maintenance of security in the Gulf of Guinea should be agreed in coordination with States on the basis of cooperation, with respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

The need for an integrated strategy is urgent. It should include formulas to prevent the manifestations of terrorism and organized crime that have arisen in Africa, particularly in the Sahel — all of which were exacerbated by the intervention in Libya in 2011 — from expanding throughout a region that, through the efforts of its peoples and Governments, has remained immune to that threat.

Regional anti-piracy coordination is the answer to combatting and eradicating the phenomenon of piracy and insecurity in the vast area of the Gulf of Guinea basin, and has a significant impact on the economy of the countries of the region. In that regard, we hope that the extraordinary meeting to be held in Lomé in October will be a significant milestone in subregional cooperation in intergovernmental security efforts, and we call on the international community to support it strongly.

In the context of the United Nations, it is important to adopt joint positions and comprehensive solutions for preventing conflicts in politically stable countries such as those of the subregion, whose main challenge is oriented to sustainable development. In that regard, we recognize the work done by the regional offices for West and Central Africa, which still have many challenges ahead.

Lastly, Venezuela reiterates its commitment to peacebuilding in Africa and will continue to offer our contributions and experiences on the basis of interregional and international cooperation.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the delegations of China, Angola and Senegal for their initiative to convene today's meeting of the Security Council on the issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his contribution to today's debate.

In the current context, we welcome the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, which calls additional attention to this matter.

The Russian Federation is seriously concerned about the ongoing expansion of pirate activities along the west coast of Africa, which have spread far beyond the territorial waters of the countries of the region. Beginning in 2012, the International Maritime Bureau has regularly recorded significant incidents in the region. The lives and safety of people are increasingly threatened, which is of particular concern. The hostage-taking of seafarers is a relatively new and alarming trend in the Gulf of Guinea. Russian nationals have been among those targeted.

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea now clearly appear to be a highly functioning criminal business that threatens maritime shipping and transit, as well as the prosperity of coastal countries. According to sources in the region, the aggregate economic losses due to piracy come to billions of dollars. According to available information, including reports of the International Maritime Bureau, the majority of attacks continue to be conducted not far from the coast, sometimes at the very edge of the territorial waters of coastal States. Resolving this issue will therefore require above all the enhancement of coastal controls by strengthening coast guards and improving their technical equipment. There is also a need to create conditions conducive to the effective legal prosecution of the average pirate and captains of the piracy business. It is important to step up efforts to identify and suppress channels of financing for piracy.

We welcome the individual initiatives of countries of the region, as well as their efforts in the framework of regional organizations, to improve coordination mechanisms for combatting piracy and armed robbery at sea. We call for the speedy drafting and implementation of a joint anti-piracy strategy that would promote the more effective utilization of all existing resources. We express the hope that the Gulf of Guinea Interregional Coordination Centre, established in Cameroon in 2014, will become fully functional in the coming months, as foreseen in the decisions of the high-level Summit of the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, which took place in Yaoundé in February.

In conclusion, I note that Russia has fruitful experience in participating in international efforts to combat piracy in the north-western sector of the Indian Ocean. We are ready to share our insight and know-how in that regard.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of China.

China thanks Angola and Senegal for joining us in the organization of this open debate. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his briefing.

As an important international shipping route and energy base, the Gulf of Guinea is a lifeline for the coastal States of the region. Recent years have seen frequent pirate attacks and armed robbery throughout the territorial waters of the Gulf of Guinea. These attacks are characterized by their brutality and links to terrorism organizations, illegal armed groups and criminal gangs. Such activities undermine the environment for the economic and social development of the African countries concerned, in addition to posing a grave threat to maritime passage for international trade, as well as for regional peace and security. Safeguarding safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea is an essential part of the efforts to improve the safety and security of global connectivity. That constitutes an important guarantee for the development and prosperity of coastal and regional countries; it is a common responsibility that must be shared by the entire international community.

Standing at the forefront of the fight against piracy, the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea have made tremendous efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea. China expresses its great appreciation in that regard. China supports the African countries concerned in their efforts to enhance coordination, formulate a common strategy for maritime security, create a regional counter-piracy mechanism and conduct joint patrols at sea. We call upon the international community to pay attention to the difficulties faced by Gulf of Guinea coastal States, including a lack of financial resources, infrastructure and equipment, and to implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and assist the countries of the region to build up their capacity to fight piracy. Efforts should be focused on the four following aspects.

First, on the basis of respect for the leadership of the Gulf of Guinea coastal countries, assistance should be provided to the countries concerned to enhance their capacity-building on counter-piracy efforts. Other countries should take an active part in the construction, operation and maintenance of their ports, among other infrastructure, in order that they can provide better service to ships in the areas of docking, supplies and maintenance, as well as improve logistical support. It is also necessary to help them to strengthen training for their maritime security forces and to provide them with the necessary equipment, such as vessels and radar systems, so as to improve their operational capacity in joint law enforcement and monitoring.

Secondly, regional and subregional organizations should have a greater role, and a long-term mechanism should be put in place at the regional level. The international community should support regional and subregional organizations — such as the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission — in their efforts to comprehensively implement the integrated strategy to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea by increasing financial and technical inputs, enhancing institution-building in the fight against piracy and ensuring the full, effective and sustainable operation of the relevant mechanisms. China looks forward to a positive outcome to the next AU Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, which will be held in October and will further advance the regional and subregional endeavour on counter-piracy.

Thirdly, resources should be mobilized to strengthen international cooperation on counter-piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. International organizations, including the United Nations and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), should provide more support to coastal countries. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa should accord greater importance to the needs of the countries concerned and provide regular briefings to the Security Council on the latest developments. We call upon countries to continue their contributions to the IMO West and Central Africa Maritime Security Trust Fund, while drawing on the success achieved. On the basis of full consultation with the coastal States, the international community could explore the possibility of joint law enforcement as a new way to intensify counter-piracy efforts.

Fourthly, development assistance to coastal States should be scaled up. The international community should increase assistance to the coastal States in the light of their economic and social development plans, help them to eradicate poverty, speed up economic and social development and improve the situation of youth employment. Cooperation on counter-terrorism should be strengthened. Transnational organized crime should be combated effectively. The links that connect pirates with terrorist organizations and illegal armed groups should be severed, and channels for drug trafficking and financing should be blocked. Greater efforts should be made to ensure legal accountability.

Thanks to the joint efforts of the members of the Security Council, presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, on the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, was adopted earlier during this meeting. That is a positive response to the request of the coastal and regional States for enhanced international cooperation in the fight against piracy. It crystallizes international consensus on the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and proposes new ideas on joint responses to tackle the problem. That will strongly enhance and deepen international cooperation against piracy.

China and Africa make up a community of common destiny and interests, sharing will and woe and seeking a win-win outcome. Guided by the principle of sincerity, political results, affinity and good faith and the right approach to justice and interests, China has taken an active part in Africa's efforts to strengthen capacity-building for the maintenance of peace and security. China has actively participated in international cooperation against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and has provided assistance to the coastal States for capacity-building in the area of infrastructure. China's naval escort fleet has been invited to participate in join counter-piracy drills with the navies of Nigeria and Cameroon. China has provided the coastal States with material and equipment for counter-piracy purposes. Chinese enterprises have been active in building ports in the coastal States of Nigeria, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. They will provide solid support for the maritime operations of the regional States. China will continue to implement the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit between China and Africa, cooperate with African countries for the maintenance of security in the waters of the Gulf of Guinea, with a view to creating an enabling security environment for Africa's economic and social development, including supporting African countries in their efforts to achieve lasting peace and common prosperity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I would also like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly. I wish to inform all concerned that, given the length of the list of speakers, we will be carrying on this open debate right through the lunch hour.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Robert Dussey, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of Togo.

Mr. Dussey (Togo) (*spoke in French*): I would like, first of all, to thank the People's Republic of China, Senegal and Angola for their initiative in organizing this high-level open debate on the issue of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. That reflects the interest they attach to the promotion of peace, security and stability wherever they are threatened, and in Africa in particular. I would also like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his briefing on the issue under review.

I appreciate the opportunity afforded to me by the Security Council to talk about this issue, which is closely linked to the theme chosen for the Extraordinary Summit of the African Union to be held in Lomé on 15 October. I would like to begin by mentioning the great importance of the Lomé Summit following the various other summits held on the African continent. I assure the Security Council that, in the face of the current concerns having to do with maritime security and furthering development by promoting the blue economy, the twenty-sixth Ordinary Summit of the African Union, held in Addis Ababa, decided that the Lomé Summit should lead to the adoption and signing of an African charter on maritime safety and security and development.

In the face of such a serious situation, it is important to understand what we can expect from the twenty-sixth Summit in Lomé, namely, the adoption of the draft charter. Never in the history of the African continent, in particular the history of the African Union, has there been a charter of that nature. There have been several African Union decisions, but this will be the first time that the entire continent comes together to adopt a draft charter for maritime security and development in Africa.

Why does the African continent need such a charter? There can be no doubt that maritime insecurity in all its forms, as the Security Council has repeatedly stated, constitutes a genuine threat to peace and security in Africa. The problems with which Africans are confronted with regard to the protection of maritime space, which requires a collective and general response, justifies the convening of the Lomé meeting and the adoption of the draft charter. The draft Lomé charter is an instrument aimed at fighting maritime insecurity and other reprehensible acts committed on the high seas. After several Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 2018 (2011), 2039 (2012) and 2184 (2014), we know that it is important that Africa, which is called upon to implement the programme entitled 2050 African Union Integrated Maritime Strategy, also known as the 2050 AIM Strategy, be given an opportunity to take a decision on its maritime future.

The draft Lomé charter will also serve as an instrument for the development of a blue economy. The draft charter is intended to promote the development of a flourishing blue economy that is sustainable and environment-friendly in a well-secured space. The proposed charter encourages the implementation of a shared policy on fishing and aquaculture that would promote the conservation and sustainable management of fish stocks as well. It provides for effective measures for tackling illegal fishing, which has caused considerable losses for countries. Moreover, the adoption of the draft Lomé charter should enable African countries to stimulate economic growth through job creation along the coast of the continent of Africa, particularly through the promotion of artisanal fishing and the commercialization of fish products at the national, regional and subregional levels.

I think it is also important to recognize the importance of international trade and tourism in the economic growth of States. The draft charter recalls and encourages all the initiatives aimed at the goals of protecting marine and coastal environment in conformity with the international instruments dealing with biodiversity and of promoting the sustainable management of the marine population and the marine species and their related ecosystems.

The draft charter is also a melting pot of various normative African regulations governing the fight for security on the high seas. It is an instrument of consolidation and of regional and subregional integration aimed at uniting and strengthening existing normative frameworks, particularly those drawn from the Djibouti Code of Conduct of 29 January 2009, as well as the Declaration of the Yaoundé Summit of 25 June 2013, referred to earlier this morning, and the 2050 AIM Strategy, of which I spoke. Furthermore, the draft charter seeks to pave the way for further initiatives and actions and the marshalling of resources to enable us to achieve our basic goals, which are essentially to heighten awareness and ensure that we have the necessary legal tools for all African States to be able to tackle the phenomenon of insecurity at sea.

The Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, scheduled to take place on 15 October in Lomé, will no doubt mark an important milestone in the existence and the implementation of the objectives of the pan-African organization — the African Union — which is fully committed to the process of a renaissance of the entire African continent. What we are working for is an Africa that is free and responsible and willing and able to take advantage of all its resources and to act so as to develop its potential, particularly that which is represented by maritime space and to harness that so as to deliver development and well-being for our peoples. That is the essential purpose, as it were, of the Lomé Summit scheduled for 15 October.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Ms. Annika Söder, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Söder (Sweden): It is an honour to be at the United Nations today in the Security Council, speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden.

At the outset, we would like to thank China, Angola and Senegal for organizing this open debate on a subject of great importance to us all. We would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his briefing this morning.

The increase in pirate attacks off the coast of West Africa and the steadily expanding area of their operations affect more countries and more people every year. That poses a threat to peace, security and stability in an already vulnerable region. Furthermore, the instability and the threats at sea in the Gulf of Guinea present a major obstacle to the development and prosperity of the region. It is therefore of the utmost importance to increase international cooperation aimed at curbing that trend and to find a solution to a growing problem. How then can we join forces to tackle that concern? We would like to highlight three areas that we deem to be particularly important.

First, regional cooperation is key. It is therefore very encouraging that the member States of the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea agreed, in 2013 at their Summit in Yaoundé, on the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activities in West and Central Africa. The Code of Conduct and the establishment of the necessary institutions for maritime security in the region are important steps in the right direction. Those institutions are not yet operational, and they need further support.

Moreover, closer cooperation among the navies and coast guards of the region needs to be a priority. Finding ways of patrolling each other's waters could also be considered and further developed. It is also important that the right means to prosecute and incarcerate criminals arrested at sea exist. For our part, we are considering how we can best further support the efforts by the countries of the region in that regard.

Secondly, the experiences of the European Union Naval Force Somalia — Operation Atalanta — which is pursuing counter-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa, and to which we have contributed on several occasions, should be capitalized on. That Security Council-mandated operation provides a clear example of how numerous and coordinated local, regional and international efforts at sea and on land can collectively reduce piracy and stabilize maritime regions.

Thirdly, we also need to keep in mind that piracy and armed robbery at sea are complex phenomena linked to poverty and social unrest. Addressing the root causes requires a comprehensive and inclusive strategy for promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the region as a whole.

In that regard, the region's potential to benefit from the blue economy and harness the vast potential of ocean resources so as to unlock growth and wealth in the marine and maritime sectors should be pursued further. The important work already under way in several countries of the region aimed at increasing the economic contribution of marine resources through strengthened fisheries governance, reduced illegal fishing and increased local value added to fish projects is highly encouraging. My own Government, in partnership with countries of the region, is currently looking into how we, in a better and more sustainable way, can unlock the potential of seas and oceans for innovation and growth through capacity-building and through collaboration.

We call for coherent and well-coordinated intervention from local, subregional, regional and international actors, including with a focus on bridging the gaps between security and development. The international community and the United Nations, especially through the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, must continue supporting regional actors in their specific efforts against piracy, while other United Nations entities must pursue the goal of bringing long-term development and stability to the region, including by investing in local and national capacities. The role of the Peacebuilding Commission has never been more important.

I would like to thank you once again, Mr. President, for initiating this important discussion. We hope that today's debate will spur further international and regional coordination and cooperation in the fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Mendonça e Moura (Portugal): It gives me great pleasure to address the Security Council on behalf of Portugal as part of this timely initiative by the Chinese presidency, co-sponsored by Angola and Senegal.

Portugal shares the view that security challenges in the Gulf of Guinea region have to continue to be tackled in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Although the main focus of the international community has been directed at the problem of maritime security, in particular as it pertains to the safety and security of navigation, the region faces broader security concerns that go well beyond the coastline. In fact, the problems of piracy and interrelated phenomena — such as armed robbery at sea and oil bunkering — are a ramification of the broader threat of transnational organized crime in West Africa.

The increasing number of unlawful events in the Gulf of Guinea during the current year is a reality. The destabilizing effects of piracy and the corruptive influence of transnational organized crime are being felt widely in region. Hence, it is high time we all take effective measures to prevent those criminal activities.

Resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012) both express the deep concern about the threat that piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea pose to international navigation, security and the economic development of States in the region. In 2015 in the Gulf of Guinea, 81 per cent of the reported incidents of unlawful acts took place within the territorial and internal waters of coastal States. Therefore, their role in coping with that scourge is more and more demanding.

Pirates and individuals involved in armed robbery at sea have been developing their weaponry. In the case of the Gulf of Guinea, they have increased the violence employed in the attacks. In addition to small firearms, pirates are now using machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. With those technologies, their attacks can be completed much faster, sometimes in less than 20 minutes. Preventing and avoiding those kinds of attacks will be successful only when we address the root causes that motivate those individuals to put their own lives and those of others at stake.

But the Gulf of Guinea is too large, and we will not prevail until and unless we act together. The geopolitical features speak for themselves: 6,000 kilometres of coastline, 17 coastal States, 2 island States and 5 landlocked States, all depending on the Gulf of Guinea for their survival. It is therefore of the utmost importance to continue to actively support regional efforts in the Gulf of Guinea. Three elements remain crucial in that endeavour. First and foremost, there is a need for political will and engagement with a view to achieving concrete results. Secondly, there is a need for technological means to ensure security. And, thirdly, there must be coordination of the different actors and initiatives.

In line with the resolutions I just mentioned, and considering the African Union 2050 Integrated Maritime Strategy, several efforts have been undertaken to promote synergies among regional and international actors in the Gulf of Guinea. Those efforts have had noteworthy results, namely, in the outcome of the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, held in Yaoundé in June 2013, which agreed on the establishment of an integrated interregional maritime architecture, with four interconnected and mutually reinforcing layers. We believe that the interregional framework, design and agreed to in Yaoundé, should be the linchpin of any international approach and support to the organizations and States in the region, with respect for regional and local ownership. In that regard, let me add a few thoughts on what we think the role of the international community, and of the United Nations in particular, should be in contributing to regional efforts.

First and foremost, we must concentrate on mobilizing support to the Yaoundé process, the relevant regional organizations and the coastal States. That encompasses the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in Yaoundé and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa, in Pointe Noire, Congo, and the Regional Maritime Security Centre for West Africa , located in Abidjan, as well as all of the planned multinational coordination centres, of which only those located in Cotonou — Zone E — and in Douala — Zone D — are active so far.

Secondly, we must foster cooperation among national authorities and promote capacity-building, while trying to make good use of all available mechanisms. Capacity-building should entail both the public and private sectors, which are are the main targets of pirates and of the armed robbery incidents.

Thirdly, we must assist individual countries and regional organizations in the creation of common legal approaches at national and regional levels, so as to give them the appropriate means to deal more effectively with the ever-changing nature of threats to security and stability in the region.

Finally, we must raise awareness of the importance of the blue economy for coastal States and to facilitate cooperation in the establishment of concrete sustainable blue economy projects for the benefit of local communities.

I would like to reiterate Portugal's engagement in contributing to the international efforts to help the coastal States in the Gulf of Guinea in facing the important challenges that have brought us here today. Our long-established technical, military and legal cooperation with countries in the region — namely, with Angola, Cabo Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe; the know-how that we have acquired in managing a very wide exclusive economic zone and in defining one of the largest continental shelves in the world; and our experience in participating in and leading piracy-fighting missions in the Gulf of Aden are good references of our capabilities in that respect.

In conclusion, let me underscore that Portugal currently holds the presidency of the Group of Seven Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, coinciding with Japan's Group of Seven chairmanship. During our presidency of the Group, we will strive to promote synergies and capacity-building along the lines I mentioned here, in close coordination with the Yaoundé process members, the Economic Community of West African States, Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, and all the other relevant international actors and initiatives.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Plasai (Thailand): Let me first express my delegation's appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate, which is co-sponsored by China, Angola and Senegal, and to all the briefers for their insightful remarks.

As set out in the concept note (S/2016/321, annex), the Gulf of Guinea is one of the regions that has been most plagued by piracy and armed robbery at sea. Yet the problem has not received due international attention. The last time that the Security Council considered this issue (see S/PV.6723), it adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2013/13. Since then, the situation has persisted and even escalated. We welcome today's debate as an opportunity to remind the Council and the international community that piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea requires sustained attention and collective actions. I wish to highlight several of our contributions in that regard.

First, with regard to counter-piracy measures, resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012) encourage States in the region to take concerted actions to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea. They also encourage the international community to provide assistance to that end. That is a key message. Only through the collective efforts of the entire international community can the problem be effectively addressed. We must help countries in the region, as well as the relevant regional and subregional organizations, to enhance cooperation on joint monitoring and patrols, and the sharing of intelligence with a view to implementing the integrated maritime security strategy, and to operationalizing the relevant regional mechanisms, in particular the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea.

We can also learn from the experience in other parts of the world, in particular the Gulf of Aden. In that case, two important factors contributed to the significant reduction in incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea. The first was effective international joint naval patrols in the designated high-risk areas. The second factor was compliance with the best management practices and anti-piracy guidance developed by the shipping industry and the International Maritime Organization. We should consider applying those good operational practices to the situation in the Gulf of Guinea.

Secondly, with regard to compliance with international law, it must be emphasized that any measures taken to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea must be consistent with international law. Due regard should be given in particular to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out the legal framework applicable to activities in maritime areas under national jurisdiction and beyond. The objective should be to effectively counter piracy and armed robbery at sea, without impairing the freedom of navigation, the protection of the marine environment and safe access to marine resources, in accordance with international law.

Thirdly, with regard to addressing the root causes of the issue and to capacity-building, while the problem manifests itself offshore, a comprehensive solution cannot be found without adequate onshore measures and undertakings. As with other types of organized crime, acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea are largely economically motivated. Therefore, we need to address the socioeconomic grievances that prompt many to resort to such crimes. Creating economic opportunities and alternative livelihoods for local communities can contribute to the resolution of that problem in a sustainable manner. In addition, international assistance should be directed at helping States in the region to strengthen their social-welfare efforts and their law-enforcement and prosecution capacities in relation to piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Piracy is a challenge that concerns us all. The Kingdom of Thailand has been working with the international community to tackle that scourge and ensure safety and security at sea. As part of the Combined Maritime Forces partnership, the Royal Thai Navy has successfully played an active role in joint anti-Somali piracy operations. At the regional level, we have made constructive contributions under the frameworks of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Maritime Forum and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the Kingdom of Thailand's commitment to supporting the Gulf of Guinea countries in their efforts to fight piracy and armed robbery at sea. In particular, we are ready to share our humble experience in maritime safety and security, as well as in alternative development, so as to improve the livelihood of the people. That experience could be applied in the context of the Gulf of Guinea.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer for the African Union to the United Nations.

Mr. António: Allow me to start by congratulating the delegations of Angola, China and Senegal for having jointly convened this timely debate on an important issue that deserves greater attention from the international community. I also thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, for his briefing.

(*spoke in French*)

I would also like to welcome the presence of Mr. Robert Dussey, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Togo, and Ms. Annika Söder, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden. I would especially like to thank Mr. Dussey for shedding light on the African Union initiatives, including thee draft charter clarifying what is being done on the continent.

(*spoke in English*)

Acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea in Africa's Gulf of Guinea represent a major concern not only to the region but also to the African Union and the international community as a whole. Our concerns are all the more acute as, over the past decade, piracy attacks in that region have increased in severity and scope, spreading northward and southward. Nowadays, such attacks represent more than a quarter of all attacks reported worldwide. There is no need to underscore the long-range and far-reaching negative implications that those criminal acts continue to have on the countries concerned, given the fact that energy security and trade in the region depend, to a large extent, on sea-based transport. As indicated in the concept note (S/2016/321, annex), every year such attacks inflict billions of dollars of economic losses on the countries concerned in the region.

Despite those facts, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has only recently gained international attention. We all remember the efforts made by African delegations, especially the delegation of the Republic of Benin, to draw the Council's attention and concern to that issue. Unfortunately, little concrete action has been taken since the adoption of resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012), regarding acts of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. The resolutions have therefore had only minimal impact on the number of incidents of piracy in the region. Moreover, the technical assistance requested from the international community has yet to be deployed in full.

National, regional, continental and international coordination appear to be a sine qua non if we want to effectively fight maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea and beyond. The African Union continues to cooperate closely with subregional actors in taking all the appropriate measures to combat maritime crime and insecurity and to address the underlying factors so as to foster long-term security and stability in the region.

It is in that context that the African Union adopted, at its twenty-second Summit, the 2050 African Union Integrated Maritime Strategy and Plan of Action, which should be viewed as a complement and support to regional efforts on the continent. It is also in that context that the African Union plans to hold an Extraordinary Summit in Lomé, as mentioned by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of Togo, on the issue of maritime security. As we already stated, his participation in this meeting is another demonstration of not only the engagement, but also the awareness on the part of the leadership in Africa.

At the regional level, countries of the region and concerned regional organizations have taken numerous steps to combat piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. It is unnecessary, therefore, to underscore what many delegations have already said with regard to the importance of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of Central and West Africa on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, held in June 2013 in Yaoundé. That Summit led to an ambitious memorandum of understanding that established the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery Against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa and the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea. The memorandum also established the International Conference on Maritime and Energy Security, which was sponsored by Angola, the United States of America and Italy, and held in Luanda. The key question remains how adequately and effectively we have supported all of those initiatives. The coordination of those initiatives is important as well. Also of paramount importance is the use of established bodies, such as the Gulf of Guinea

Commission and the Gulf of Guinea Interregional Coordination Centre.

Regional and continental efforts need to be fully supported and enabled by the international community, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012). We also need to strengthen the collective efforts of the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. These efforts must also include other neighbouring regional and international bodies, namely the Southern Africa Development Community and the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic, which includes 21 African countries and three countries from Latin America, namely, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, the latter being the current President of the zone, as already stated by the Uruguayan delegation.

Maritime security is closely linked to security on land, as well as to the conditions of stability and development of the concerned nations. The concerned countries need to be supported to achieve long-term prosperity, including for the development of the maritime domain to enable greater trade, cooperation and job creation. We must also ensure that our interventions in the fields of development, including the development of the blue economy, which was already well stated by the Minister of Togo; cooperation; peacebuilding; conflict prevention and international security are mutually reinforcing.

For its part, the African Union will continue to support all efforts of the region and its coastal States to address the many challenges of maritime security and organized crime that peoples of this region are facing.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union (EU) and adds the following remarks in its national capacity.

We thank China, Angola and Senegal for bringing this issue back to the Security Council after the debates in 2011 and 2012 and the adoption of resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012) and presidential statement S/PRST/2013/13 in August 2013. We also welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Togo, Mr. Robert Dussey, who represents one of the countries most affected by this crisis.

Maritime piracy is a deadly threat to the lives of all men and women working at sea. It is a threat to the maritime industry and international trade. It has links with organized and transnational crimes. It fuels conflicts. Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea in particular undermine the consolidation of peace in Western Africa and the economic development of the region to the benefit of its people. Italy therefore remains concerned about the continuing pirate and armed attacks in the Gulf of Guinea and notes with concern their most recent rise in number, violence and geographic extension. It is particularly worrisome that these attacks occur both in international and national waters, undermining freedom and the security of navigation, which are essential to trade and economic development. Italy reiterates its commitment to halting this trend through a multidimensional approach based on prevention, diplomacy, training, security and addressing the root causes. Let me share with the Council some concrete examples beyond our active participation in the EU strategy for the Gulf of Guinea in support of the Yaoundé process.

First of all, my country is an active member of the Group of Seven Plus Friends of the Gulf of Guinea aimed at facilitating the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and of the Yaoundé Summit declarations on maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Guinea. We look forward to the upcoming meeting under the Portuguese presidency. Italy will be attending and working to advance the implementation of the decision to establish, by 2016, a full-fledged maritime security and safety architecture and to promote police and judicial cooperation in the region.

In the same spirit of international engagement and cooperation, my country officially supported Angola in convening last November in Luanda the International Conference on Maritime and Energy Security. Our Deputy Minister for Defence attended the meeting, which ended with the adoption of the Luanda Declaration on information-sharing and raising maritime situational awareness. On this basis, the Italian and the Angolan navies are negotiating a technical follow-up arrangement.

Secondly, local ownership and national leadership are essential to complement international support and direct it where it is most needed and effective. In this regard, I stress the important role played by regional and subregional organizations.The Yaoundé Code of Conduct has chosen three regional organizations to steer the process — the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission — and we look forward to cooperating with them. We welcome in particular the high-level meeting held in February and underscore the importance of the Interregional Coordination Centre on Maritime Safety and Security for Central and West Africa, based in Cameroon, which we are actively supporting through a grant. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel can also play a facilitating role as part of its overall action in the region.

Thirdly, training and capacity-building are crucial and we have been focusing on this. During the circumnavigation of Africa in the first half of 2014, the Italian navy carried out specific training activities on maritime security and the fight against piracy on our flagship, the *Nave Cavour*. Over 20 African countries and 21 ports were touched during this campaign, including those in the Gulf of Guinea, and maritime capacity-building initiatives were carried out very successfully. In the same spirit, Italy is currently supporting the maritime programme of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which promotes capacity-building to address and eradicate crimes committed at sea, including acts of piracy, armed robbery and illicit trafficking.

This is part of our comprehensive effort to help West Africa and Sahel countries enhance their overall capacities in tackling illicit flows of arms, natural resources, goods and persons. The Italian navy has bilateral training programmes with its counterparts in the Gulf of Guinea and beyond. Through our Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza, Italy has developed a wide range of cooperation activities with the region's countries in this field. Let me name three examples: border and custom management programmes; investigative techniques and counter-terrorism training courses; and information sharing.

My last point is that, in order to tackle the phenomenon effectively, we must go beyond piracy and armed robbery and address their root causes on land. Socioeconomic development; job opportunities; inequalities; education; youth engagement; and women's empowerment must all be factored into our decision-making on this issue. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and the African Union's Agenda 2063 will play a pivotal role to this end. The African Union summit on maritime security and safety and development in Africa, to be held in Lomé on 15 October, will offer an excellent opportunity to advance the agenda regarding the Gulf of Guinea and we look forward to its outcome and concrete deliverables. We will further discuss the way to strengthen our joint efforts with African partners on security and development issues in the Italy-Africa ministerial conference to be held in Rome on 18 May.

Finally, allow me to make a very short personal remark. I was born 200 metres from the Mediterranean Sea in a house that still proudly stands on the shore of one of the most ancient maritime cities in the world, Naples. Generations of my family have lived and prospered with the sea. The sea brings one food, money, culture and an open-minded future. That is one of the reasons why we are so active in the Mediterranean to the point of risking our lives, because we know that the sea can bring a better life for everyone in the future. We are really committed to ensuring the pacific use of the sea in the Gulf of Guinea and in all of the open seas and oceans in every corner of the world.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Let me thank China, Angola and Senegal for proposing this debate, as well as Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

Piracy and armed robbery at sea are serious crimes. They involve not only the theft of private property, but also a disrespect of many fundamental rights and obligations, since in some cases deaths, kidnapping and the demand for ransom are present. In the Gulf of Guinea, this constitutes a challenge that needs to be addressed by the countries in the region with the support of the international community. In order to face this challenge, we need to understand the situation in the Gulf of Guinea by analysing recent statistics, as well as the specific characteristics of piracy and armed robbery in the area.

According to the International Maritime Organization, there has been a decrease in the number of incidents of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea over the past years. There were 45 and 54 incidents in 2014 and 2013, compared to 64 and 61 in 2012 and 2011. In 2015, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) of the International Chamber of

Commerce (ICC), a non-profit organization established to act as a focal point in the fight against all types of maritime crimes, registered 31 actual or attempted attacks in the area.

It is also important to underline that other regions recorded significantly more incidents in the same period. The ICC-IMB, for instance, recorded, in 2015, 147 cases of this kind in South-East Asia. In the Horn of Africa, during the peak of their activity in 2011, Somali pirates attacked 286 ships and hijacked 33 of them. There are also significant differences in the nature of incidents when we compare piracy and armed robbery in the Horn of Africa and in the Gulf of Guinea. Somali pirates were usually involved in kidnapping and demand for ransom. Their activities took place mostly in international waters and are therefore legally considered piracy, according to article 101 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which defines piracy as occurring "on the high seas" or "in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State".

The majority of the incidents in the Gulf of Guinea, on the other hand, were aimed at cargo robbery, especially oil, and mostly took place in territorial waters or in port areas, therefore are considered armed robbery, according to international law. Accordingly, problems regarding piracy and armed robbery on the West and East coasts of the African continent are distinct and therefore require different solutions.

The Security Council adopted resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012) on piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. In 2013, the Yaoundé Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea adopted a Declaration, a memorandum of understanding between the Economic Community of West African States, Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, and the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery Against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa. It also decided on the creation of the Interregional Coordination Centre, which was opened in 2015.

Brazil believes that the countries in the region should play the leading role in addressing the issue of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. Any regional strategy in this direction should be comprehensive and take into consideration not only security questions, but also the strengthening of institutions and the sustainable development of the region.

The international community should support the region with cooperation activities that respect national ownership. This is what my country has been trying to do. Brazil has signed military cooperation agreements with nine countries on the west coast of Africa — Namibia, Cabo Verde, South Africa, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Príncipe, Nigeria, Senegal, Angola and Equatorial Guinea. A naval mission in Namibia has been maintained by Brazil since 1994 and has so far helped to train more than 2,000 members of the Namibian navy. New missions have recently been opened in Cabo Verde and in Sao Tome and Principe. Officers and other members of the armed forces from the region have studied at Brazilian military academies.

The cooperation offered by Brazil is concentrated in capacity-building, training, military doctrine and maritime exercises. In recent years, Brazil has conducted exercises with Benin, Cabo Verde, Sao Tome and Principe and Nigeria. Since 2013, the Brazilian navy has taken part in an international maritime exercise designed to improve cooperation among participating nations in order to increase maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. The latest edition of the exercise ended last month. These are the kinds of initiatives that we believe to be necessary for improving cooperation with the countries in the region and for enhancing their capacity to combat piracy and armed robbery.

Any initiative in the region of the Gulf of Guinea must to be in harmony with the objectives of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZPCSA). I would like to recall that the zone comprises 24 countries, including all the countries situated on the west coast of Africa, from Cabo Verde and Senegal, in the north, to South Africa, as well as three South American countries across the ocean — Argentina, Uruguay, and my own country, Brazil.

In this regard, the members of the ZPCSA have agreed to consolidate the region as a zone of peace and cooperation to ensure that it remains free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of its countries. The Montevideo Declaration, adopted in 2013 at the ministerial level by the ZPCSA, directly mentioned the problem posed by piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. The Declaration recognized the leadership role that the

States of the Gulf of Guinea should play in this regard and the need for regional coordination of efforts to counter activities of piracy and armed robbery at sea. It also urged international partners to assist States and organizations in the region in the enhancement of their capabilities to counter this kind of threat.

Since 1986, the General Assembly has adopted 22 resolutions on the ZPCSA. In the most recent resolution, adopted in 2015, the General Assembly stressed the role of the ZPCSA as a forum for increased interaction and support among its member States and recalled with appreciation the holding of the seventh ministerial meeting of the ZPCSA and the adoption of the Montevideo Declaration (resolution 69/322).

Considering that the issue of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea is primarily a matter of cooperation among States, we believe that the General Assembly is the appropriate forum to lead the discussion. Consistent with the statement made earlier by the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, we believe that the Peacebuilding Commission also has a role to play. Brazil stands ready to continue to cooperate with the region in order to face this challenge.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, and the delegations of Senegal and Angola, for having taken the initiative to hold today's debate. I also thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

Belgium aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union. I wish now to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Today, as the risk of piracy seems to be decreasing in the Horn of Africa, maritime insecurity is growing in the Gulf of Guinea. This development is worrying because it carries instability at a time when the West Africa is facing other challenges posed by illicit trafficking and the proximity of the terrorist threat in the Sahel. Given that the Gulf of Guinea is a place of intense economic activity and trade, the fight against maritime insecurity there is a challenge that goes beyond the sphere of purely security matters. Ownership of this issue by the coastal States is therefore crucial. Just as important is the establishment of regional cooperation structures that will allow for greater effectiveness in the fight against the various forms of maritime crime.

We welcome in this respect the establishment, in Yaoundé, pursuant to the decision taken at the Summit of the West African and Central African Heads of State in June 2013, of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea. It is our hope that this important tool for regional cooperation becomes fully operational as soon as possible. As for Belgium, we stand alongside the West African States and are committed to supporting them in their fight against maritime crime. My country is a member of the Group of Seven Plus Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, whose action is aimed at coordinating maritime capacity-building initiatives undertaken by various international partners.

Belgium has also actively participated in the development of the European Union Maritime Security Strategy and its related Gulf of Guinea 2015-2020 Action Plan. Furthermore, Belgian bilateral initiatives are in line with the Action Plan. Accordingly, Belgium is active in strengthening the national maritime, military and civilian capabilities of several coastal States in the Gulf of Guinea through training activities it sponsors. A particularly fruitful partnership example is the one developed with Benin in which Belgium is currently cooperating in the training of personnel for three new patrol boats and in the training of marines.

Belgium also regularly provides ships from its navy as part of the international initiative "Africa Partnership Station" which aims to develop military, coast-guard and marine expertise of African coastal nations. That was the case, for example, in 2014, with a logistics support ship and, in 2015, a frigate. During the latter deployment, the Belgian frigate trained on board sailors from Togo, Gabon, Congo and Benin. It also participated in the exercise Obangame Express, conducted in the Gulf of Guinea to help local forces develop their capacity to fight illegal maritime activities. Belgium is studying the possibility of deploying again this year a logistics support ship as part of the Africa Partnership Station.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize the need for consistency in the fight against maritime crime with the improvement of the living conditions of local populations. Any lasting solution will indeed include a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the problem, taking into account the factors that fuel them, such as governance gaps and poverty. Treating the causes of the problem is to act in order to prevent their exacerbation or re-emergence. Belgium therefore welcomes the Council's adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, which contains a set of concrete recommendations on the means to that end.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to representative of Germany.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): Threats to maritime safety have become an issue of increased international concern. The Gulf of Guinea in particular is greatly affected by piracy and armed robbery at sea, inflicting billions of dollars of economic losses and threatening maritime safety. Acts of piracy are often committed with extreme violence. The countries of the region have recognized this threat. The Yaoundé process, established by Heads of State and Government in 2013, underscores the need for joint action. Allow me to stress the following three points.

First, without strong local and regional ownership we will not be able to tackle this issue successfully. Focused and relevant regional support is therefore needed at the political and financial levels, as well as through the human resources of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Yaoundé process. Germany has contributed more than €1 million in an effort to strengthen regional cooperation under the Yaoundé process, most notably through communication equipment designed to improve surveillance operations in the Gulf. Germany stands ready to increase its support in the context of its long-standing partnership with ECOWASand the Yaoundé process.

Secondly, the scope of the existing partnerships has to be widened. We therefore welcome efforts made by the private sector to ensure greater security in the Gulf of Guinea. We also appreciate the private sector's repeated calls for transparent and pragmatic cooperation between all stakeholders of the Yaoundé process.

Thirdly, maritime security is more than ever a global challenge. Under the auspices of the German presidency of the Group of Seven (G-7) last year, foreign ministers collectively agreed in the Lübeck declaration to make maritime security and effective maritime governance a priority. The Lübeck declaration calls for a cooperative, rules-based, cross-sector approach to maritime security and stresses the importance of the relevant legal frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Let me add that we fully support the commitment of Japan's G-7 2016 presidency to maritime security, and we welcome the efforts made by the Portuguese presidency of the G-7 Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vale de Almeida: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 28 member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia.

Let me start by thanking the Chinese presidency for organizing this open debate, and Angola, China and Senegal for the thoughtful concept note (S/20116/321, annex). Allow me also to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his briefing.

The European Union and its member States remain concerned about the continued incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. According to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Gulf of Guinea accounts for nearly 40 per cent of all piracy and armed robbery at sea reported worldwide so far this year. In 2015 the Gulf of Guinea represented the third-most dangerous maritime area of the globe. Since the beginning of this year, there has been a 36 per cent increase in reported incidents as compared to the same period last year, and the number of people kidnapped from ships already matches the total for the whole of 2015, with several particularly violent incidents being a source of particular concern. On average, there are approximately 40 European Union member State-flagged or owned vessels at any one time in the waters of the Gulf of Guinea. The constant risk of criminal attacks in the Gulf of Guinea is therefore a widely shared international concern. The risk of piracy and armed robbery at sea exists both in international waters and in the territorial waters of the countries in the region, especially at anchorage sites and in the Niger Delta.

Safe waters and safe passage at sea are of paramount importance for the economic and human development of the countries of the Gulf of Guinea. The maritime domain is an enabler of prosperity and sustainable development. The growing threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea is therefore in the first place a threat against the coastal States of the region and to their development. Beyond the immediate threat against the shipping industry, it is also the complex, interconnected and often cross-border nature of the threat that is worrying, as it has the potential to endanger the authority and stability of some States in the region.

From the outset, the European Union has been fully supportive of regional and international efforts to stem piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. Following the adoption of resolution 2018 (2011) and resolution 2039 (2012), as well as the interregional Summit in Yaoundé in June 2013 by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), in March 2014 the European Union adopted its own strategy for the Gulf of Guinea, in support of the Yaoundé process. Just like the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, the EU strategy goes beyond piracy and armed robbery at sea and also addresses illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, trafficking, and pollution, including oil bunkering. It also contains measures to address conducive causes on land, by promoting the development of coastal economies and the strengthening of law enforcement. In March 2015, the EU strategy was complemented by an action plan, a first report on whose implementation so far has just been finalized.

The EU and its member States are committed to continuing their assistance to the countries of the Gulf of Guinea to make the Yaoundé Code of Conduct successful, under the leadership of the three organizations that the region itself has chosen — ECOWAS, ECCAS and the GGC. We welcome the high-level meeting held in February, which should allow for the operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre based in Yaoundé by July. We encourage all the parties concerned to implement the Code of Conduct swiftly and in full.

Financial and technical support has already been provided by the European Union to the International Criminal Court and to the Regional Centre on Maritime Security in Central Africa, based in in Pointe Noire, Congo. The European Union and its member States have also developed a concept for live exercises at sea and crisis response training, and have also provided training for maritime stakeholders carried out by two universities in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. We also highly value the supportive work in the Group of Seven Plus Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, which is currently under Portuguese presidency and meets twice every year. In our view, that is the adequate forum to develop ideas and actions to support the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and to ensure that partners work in synergy.

As already stated, the European Union and its member States are already active in the Gulf of Guinea with the implementation of national and regional projects. Further such support is underway. By the end of this year, additional projects will be formulated that will support the Yaoundé architecture, in full alignment with the 2050 African Union Integrated Maritime Strategy. We also acknowledge the work already done by several United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the IMO, and others such as Interpol. We remain committed to working closely and effectively with them.

The African Union summit on maritime security and safety and development in Africa, to be held in Lomé on 15 October, will offer an excellent opportunity to sustain momentum and awareness regarding the Gulf of Guinea. To that end, we are ready to support the Togolese Government and the African Union in their work preparing for concrete deliverables at the Summit.

In conclusion, today's debate comes at a decisive moment. I would therefore like to once again thank Angola, China and Senegal for taking the initiative to hold this debate. Overall, we are experiencing a growing and possibly still underestimated threat to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. It is therefore the right moment to consider how we can do more collectively to prevent the situation from worsening further. The work should proceed on several fronts — root causes, law enforcement, capacity-building, maritime domain awareness and job creation.

From the outset, the EU has been a fully committed partner of the Gulf of Guinea countries and is determined to remain so. Local ownership and local leadership, particularly on the part of regional States and organizations, is essential if our support, and that of other international partners, will be focused where it is most needed.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Zaayman (South Africa): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for collaborating with Angola and Senegal in organizing today's open debate on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, which my delegation views as an important and timely topic relevant to the development and security of Africa.

Piracy and armed robbery have a negative impact on the social, economic and humanitarian situations in the States affected in the Gulf of Guinea. They also affect the hinterland and landlocked countries that depend on the sea for exports and imports. Piracy is estimated to result in an annual loss of $2 billion to the economy of the West African subregion. We commend the determination exhibited by the countries of the region, including through the planning of regional coordination centres designed to implement the integrated maritime security strategy adopted in 2013. We also commend the outcome of the extraordinary high-level meeting, held in February, of the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, aimed at facilitating the launch of the operations of the Interregional Coordination Centre as soon as possible.

It is important to take note of the adoption by the African Union (AU) in 2014 of the 2050 AU Integrated Maritime Strategy, which seeks to move Africa's maritime security practices and initiatives from a subregional level, as represented by the 2009 Djibouti Code of Conduct in East Africa, the 2013 Yaoundé Declaration in West Africa and the Southern African Development Community's Maritime Security Strategy, to a continental level. It thus recognizes AU member States' common maritime challenges and opportunities and addresses threats that negatively affect social and economic development in African States in an integrated manner. It sees the challenges of maritime security as linked to development challenges and calls for a broad approach to addressing them. That is significant, given the fact that between them 38 African countries have a combined coastline of 26,000 nautical miles, that sea fishing contributes to the food security of 200 million Africans and that more than 90 per cent of Africa's trade is seaborne, highlighting the importance of addressing the threats that piracy and armed robbery at sea pose for the continent.

My delegation wishes to recall the decision of the AU Assembly of January 2014, which stressed the need for strategic partnerships in support of initiatives aimed at implementing Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy. It allows for the vital role played by the international community in supporting national and regional mechanisms for dealing with maritime security challenges. In strengthening a meaningful partnership between Africa and the international community, we need substantial assistance from the international community and intensified engagement on the part of the United Nations in order to build on Africa's efforts to deal in an integrated manner with the problem of piracy on a basis of national and regional ownership. Recent experiences in the Gulf of Aden have shown how devastating the economic and security consequences to the international community can be if the challenge of piracy, including its root causes, is not addressed in a determined and collaborative manner.

In that regard, my delegation wishes to emphasize the importance of focusing on the root causes of piracy, such as high levels of youth unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment, and the consequent need for strengthening development interventions, in line with the African Union Agenda 2063, which identifies the maritime economy as a major contributor to growth and development in Africa.

South Africa strongly believes that it is urgent that the Security Council send a strong and unequivocal message to the end users of pirated goods. In that regard, it is also important to start exploring the nexus between the illicit pirate economy and formal global stakeholders, including in the area of hydrocarbons.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Menkveld (Netherlands): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to the People's Republic of China for organizing today's open debate on an important topic and, together with the Republics of Angola and Senegal, for providing us with a thoughtful concept note (S/2016/321, annex).

The threat to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea is not only a threat to the security and prosperity of African States but one that affects seafaring States such as the Netherlands and others around the globe. It is therefore essential that we solve the problem, and that can be done most effectively through close international cooperation that also addresses the root causes. In the wake of the important steps that have already been taken through the Yaoundé agreements, it is now time to move forward.

The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union (EU), and I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity on the problem of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, the response to it and the importance of an integrated approach.

The situation in the region remains worrying. In the first few months of 2016, we have seen kidnappings, theft and violent attacks on mariners. The need to address the situation is clear. As I said, illegal maritime activities in the Gulf of Guinea are not just the problem of West African States; they are our problem as well. Such activities harm regional trade and economic development, hinder the flow of commerce between Europe and West Africa and other regions and thus do damage to prosperity on a larger scale. Within the countries of West Africa, a lack of maritime security poses a threat on various levels to both coastal and inland communities. Organized maritime crime, including trafficking in drugs and persons and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, is an element of maritime insecurity that goes beyond the act of piracy to disrupt societies across the continent, increase corruption and threaten communities' livelihoods. A comprehensive approach and response is required.

In June 2014, the members of the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commisssion gathered together to express their commitment to improving collaboration in the region. The result was the Yaoundé Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, which is being implemented right now. We look forward to the rapid operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre. Since most illegal activities take place within territorial waters, West African coastal countries have a responsibility to coordinate their response. As such, we appreciate the efforts and progress being made on the Yaoundé agenda.

In March 2014, the European Union adopted a strategy for the Gulf of Guinea, aimed at mapping threats and stressing the importance of regional and international action. That initial plan has now been transformed into an EU action plan so as to support Governments in the region in taking on the challenges of combating maritime security on several fronts, and the Netherlands is an active supporter of that strategy. In order to tackle the multifaceted challenges of maritime security in an effective way, we need a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes at various levels. Developing coastal communities and removing incentives for those communities to resort to maritime crime is pivotal in a long-term approach. In addition to a strong response to criminal activities, we should strive for inclusive economic wealth in the region. To achieve that, the Netherlands actively supports the implementation of the aforementioned European Union Gulf of Guinea Action Plan 2015-2020 and its development activities in the region. Within that framework, and as part of an integrated approach, the Netherlands focuses its efforts in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea on maritime capacity-building, and we undertake exercises and provide training in the countries on the prevention of criminal activities, such as drug smuggling and human trafficking.

In September 2015, we organized, together with the Governments of Togo and the African Union (AU) representatives, a meeting in New York on maritime security in Africa in the run up to the AU summit on maritime security in Togo this fall. We will actively contribute with Dutch experts to the seminars at the upcoming AU summit.

In striving for a safe and secure maritime environment, cooperation is of the essence. We must work together. The Kingdom of the Netherlands therefore aims to continue to be a partner for African countries. Only through equal and respectful partnerships can we strengthen the maritime security in the region.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Greece.

Ms. Fountoulaki (Greece): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this timely and important debate. We also wish to express appreciation to China, Angola and Senegal for the useful concept note (S/2016/321) on an issue of major concern, not only to States in the Gulf of Guinea, but to the international community.

Greece aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (EU) and wishes to add the following in its national capacity:

For a traditional maritime country like Greece, with a leading shipping industry, the longest coastline in the European Union and maritime borders that are to a large extent the borders of the European Union, the safety of navigation and marine transportation is of utmost importance. Greece has contributed to the adoption of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) resolution A.1069(28), regarding the Gulf of Guinea, as well as to the European Union Maritime Security Strategy, which addresses, in an integrated way, all security challenges at sea, including piracy.

Greece recognizes the key role of all Gulf of Guinea States in raising the international community's awareness on the challenges they face in combating piracy and developing a comprehensive regional response. We fully support the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions as well as the resolutions adopted by the International Maritime Organization on the issue. We also endorse the implementation of the European Union Gulf of Guinea Action Plan 2015-2020.

The growing threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and several recent violent incidents against crews are particularly worrying. The situation poses an alarming threat to local economies, potentially undermining stability and threatening the oil revenues upon which many countries in the region rely. Greece is gravely concerned about that phenomenon, which endangers the lives of seafarers who continue to pay a heavy price. The strong commitment of the international community and close cooperation with flag States and regional organizations is necessary in order to ensure the prosecution of pirates and armed robbers. As an additional step towards prevention, it is important that States apply the guidelines and recommendations of the relevant specialized organizations, in particular, those of the International Maritime Organization.

We firmly believe that the international community must support the countries in the region to build their own maritime strategy in order to fight piracy. Local ownership renders a strategy legitimate and sustainable. Agreements providing for technical assistance and counter-piracy training will reinforce the determination to develop their means to that end. The NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Centre in Crete/Greece, in cooperation with the IMO, the African Union and, in particular, the East Africa Standby Force, provides expertise through standardized or other training tailored to specific needs, either on its premises or through mobile training teams. There have been 364 officers and experts from 30 member States trained so far, including 16 officers from nine West African States.

The problem of piracy can only be resolved with a holistic, coordinated approach on land and at sea. Preventing and addressing the root causes of the phenomenon, such as poverty and the lack of economic opportunities, and capacity-building should be among the priorities. The lessons learned from the successful international involvement against piracy off the coast of Somalia can provide useful guidelines to address issues in the Gulf of Guinea.

In view of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), and while addressing the multifaceted global challenges of the future, we should not allow the revival of phenomena such as piracy to reverse our efforts to enhance and secure development for the benefit of all nations and future generations.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We commend the Chinese presidency, as well as to the Permanent Missions of Angola and Senegal, for initiating and convening this open debate, which focuses on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, within the overall subject of the consolidation of peace in West Africa. As a member-observer of the African Union, Kazakhstan is deeply concerned that piracy in the Gulf of Guinea affects not only a number of our friendly countries in West Africa, but also the wider international community. It is therefore becoming an issue of global concern.

We strongly condemn piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, which is often part of the heavily armed criminal enterprises that employ violent methods. Those attacks by pirates have reached a high record, with some 100 attempted hijackings annually, a close second behind those in South-East Asia. It is alarming to note that pirates in the region operate a well-funded criminal industry, which includes established supply networks. The piracy attacks mainly occur in territorial waters, terminals and harbours, rather than on the high seas, which has hindered intervention by international naval forces. Furthermore, pirates have become more aggressive and better armed, with brutal tactics that defy the methods to capture them.

From the humanitarian point of view, we are concerned that the pirates in the Gulf of Guinea are especially noted for their violent modus operandi, which involves kidnapping, torture, violence and the shooting of crews, thereby constituting a conscious so-called criminal business model. It is also disconcerting that many events go unreported. From an economic point of view, acts of piracy interfere with the legitimate trading interests of the affected countries. To that end, trade in the region's major ports has dropped dramatically. We grieved that the cost of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has been estimated to be approximately $2 billion, while poverty is a big challenge for the countries of West Africa.

We commend the performance of the United Nations, the African Union and other organizations engaged in international efforts in the region to address the scourge of piracy and armed robbery. To ensure further progress, a more comprehensive regional strategy elaborated by all stakeholders is needed.

Early in the seventieth session of the General Assembly, Kazakhstan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a cost-sharing agreement for a new project called the Africa-Kazakhstan Partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals. The agreement focuses on technical support to the Ministries for Foreign Affairs and other relevant institutions in 45 African countries, including West Africa. The project will promote the sharing of institutional experiences and best practices as Governments prepare to take forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1). The United Nations Development Programme is working directly with ministries of African countries to implement that project.

We believe that our overall objective should be to build on the efforts of countries in the region to achieve greater State-building, the rule of law, good governance, inclusive political processes, security and justice sector reforms, the protection of civilians and the disarmament and reintegration of combatants. All those measures, as a complex whole, are vitally important to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. To that end, we have to think of greater military, diplomatic and development partnerships that go beyond North-South cooperation to South-South and triangular cooperation. My delegation therefore supports the actions of the United Nations, and especially those of the Council through its various resolutions concerning the region of West Africa as a whole and its countries individually.

We need to work together towards the West African region's stability, progressive development and achievement of human security for all. We therefore stand for fully implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and, most important, the 2030 Agenda, in the region. That calls for broadening the concept of peace and stability from State-centred security to people-oriented security and from purely military to non-military security, which includes the important priorities of food and water and energy security, including nuclear security, on our path to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, in his recent new security paradigm document entitled, "Manifesto. The World. The 21st Century", presented on 31 March at the fourth Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., proposed the elaboration of a 2045 global strategic initiative plan. Its main goal is to eliminate the root causes of wars and conflicts by the United Nations centennial in 2045. During his address to the General Assembly last September (see A/70/PV.13), he also called for transferring 1 per cent of the defence budgets of Member States to the special Sustainable Development Goals Fund.

Addressing the issues of piracy and armed robbery at sea is possible by bringing together existing measures, operating under the aegis of the United Nations. We therefore call on all delegations to support these bold and forward-looking approaches. Development and peace go together, and therefore we must support the countries of the West Africa region in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Kazakhstan is therefore reaching out to countries in Africa through technical assistance with UNDP projects. We have to invest more in sustainable development.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I wish to commend China for having convened this meeting devoted to a subregion that is very dear to us and with which we share concerns and ambitions, and to a topic that is particularly important to us: to consider the potential ways and perspectives to support peacebuilding efforts in this part of our mother continent, Africa.

The subregion of West African continues to face several serious problems with regard to peace and security. The topics that have raised the greatest concern are, without a doubt, the indiscriminate attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram and their destabilizing consequences for the humanitarian, human rights and security situation of the countries of the Lake Chad basin, the continuing threats facing the Malian peace process and the repercussions of the Ebola outbreak.

Notable improvements, such as the holding of peaceful and credible elections in several countries of the region, as well as progress in eradicating the Ebola epidemic in some countries of the Mano River Union — thanks in part to the excellent cooperation between the United Nations and subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) — have not masked the growing threat posed by terrorism in West Africa. Violent extremism and terrorist activities continue to pose a very serious threat to security and development in West Africa, further aggravating political, economic and humanitarian problems in the region while subordinating other threats that are equally important, such as drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

As you outlined so well in the concept note (S/2016/321, annex) prepared for this debate, Mr. President, the threats to peace unfortunately do not come only from terrorist activities. Piracy activities in the Gulf of Guinea, which has become the new centre of gravity for piracy in Africa, have stolen the show from the Gulf of Aden, where the phenomenon, most amazingly, has almost disappeared in the face of the deployment of an international military fleet. The Gulf of Guinea, an area rich in natural resources — with 8 per cent of global oil reserves, but also fisheries and other biological resources — has considerable shipping traffic, thereby offering many targets for small pirate groups, which are generally well armed and violent.

The coastal area stretching from Senegal to Angola has become the new stalking ground for pirates. Within 10 years there have been more than 600 acts of piracy, which have significantly handicapped the development of the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea. The economic losses are substantial for States, for which maritime revenues represent up to 20 per cent of their national budgets, as well as for business, including some Western oil companies that have withdrawn from the region. As confirmed by the reports of the Secretary-General on the subregion, little progress has been achieved with regard to the fight against piracy and improving maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea.

While the Yaoundé Summit in 2013 created hopes for a coordinated response at the regional and international levels to check this phenomenon, maritime insecurity nevertheless continues to be a threat to the political and economic stability of the States of the subregion, in the absence of a joint monitoring system and of a fight against piracy. The challenge is therefore to establish a framework to make it possible to pool the technical and human resources of the States of the subregion, as well as to adopt appropriate regulatory measures and predictable and recurrent financial mechanisms to support the region over the long-term. In our view, that requires the combination of the following efforts.

First, it requires strengthening international solidarity. Through resolution 2039 (2012), the Security Council encourages the States of the Gulf of Guinea, ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to develop, with the support of the United Nations and other partners, a regional strategy, as well as the harmonization of actions by their member States at sea and the elaboration or strengthening of their legislation in order to combat piracy.

The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, under the under the enlightened and active leadership of Mr. Ibn Chambas — to whom I give high praise — has spared no effort to coordinate the efforts of Member States and partners to make the decisions taken at the Yaoundé Summit fully operational. The Friends of the Gulf of Guinea Group, for its part, is playing a growing role in raising awareness of the issue.

However, nearly three years later, the conclusions reached at the Yaoundé Summit — which included a Declaration by the Heads of State, a Code of Conduct and a memorandum of understanding — have not yet produced the desired results, and external assistance, which is essential at this stage, remains limited. The initiative of the International Maritime Organization to establish a support fund to implement the Yaoundé decisions is praiseworthy, but it seems essential to us that donors ramp up their contributions and that these contributions should go beyond training and focus on equipment.

It is time for the Gulf of Guinea to enjoy international mobilization as effective and committed as that which the Gulf of Aden has received. To win the battle against piracy, the international community must respond positively to the appeal by the States of the region for international assistance, following the model of what was done in the Gulf of Aden, in which the international intervention forces could use force and coordinate their operations.

The second effort is the strengthening of interregional coordination. Given the scale of the phenomenon, obviously no one country in the region is able to resolve the problem of maritime insecurity on its own. While it is true that interregional dialogue with regard to the scourge of piracy was strengthened by the establishment of an interregional coordination centre against piracy and regional centres along the coast, the lack of cooperation among stakeholders is still being heavily felt. However, in that connection we welcome the decision of the ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff, taken in Dakar in September 2015, to incorporate Mauritania in the maritime security structure in the Gulf of Guinea.

Member States that are the primary victims of this scourge should redouble their efforts to operationalize the maritime safety and security arrangement established in the Gulf of Guinea, despite the lack of logistical and financial resources. The countries of the region are called on to find alternatives to sustainably finance the operation of their marine structures, including the regional coordination centres, which are suffering from a lack of logistical and human resources.

Regional cooperation is sometimes paralysed by the persistence of major border disputes among riparian countries. Disagreements related to the maritime border delimitation process could exacerbate security problems. That issue should be resolved by the signing of agreements creating joint operating areas among the countries concerned, as suggested in in article 83 of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Thirdly, national capacities to fight maritime piracy must be strengthened. At the State level and in terms of human resources, cooperation among national entities with maritime missions remains ineffective, with an occasional lack of communication between the navy and maritime police or the coast guard in certain countries. As for naval assets, and despite their efforts, most countries do not have an adequate arsenal to defeat the pirates in the Gulf of Guinea, who are reputed to be the most violent in the world.

To overcome those barriers, each State should work further to strengthen its legislative framework and build national structures to manage and coordinate maritime security, including through the strengthening of cooperation with the private sector and international organizations, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL and the United Nations Office for West Africa.

In conclusion, I recall that the initiative launched by Morocco in May 2009, creating the Ministerial Conference of African States Bordering the Atlantic, will be a space and framework for intra-African cooperation in which the actions of different countries in the areas of development cooperation, the peacebuilding, conflict prevention and international security, including the fight against maritime piracy, are mutually reinforcing.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I will now make a statement in my national capacity.

We too thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. The security situation in the Gulf of Guinea is assuming alarming proportions that threaten the safety of civilian vessels from all over the world and the national interests of the regional countries. Unlike Somalia, where multilateral counter-piracy efforts have led to a steady decline in attacks, the Gulf of Guinea has seen an escalation in acts of maritime piracy, including armed robbery and hostage-taking, since 2009.

Navigational safety in the Gulf of Guinea and unimpeded transport of goods are crucial to regional trade and the development efforts of the coastal countries. As the abduction of Turkish crew members of a freighter owned by a Turkish company and a failed attempt by pirates to board another ship bearing the Turkish flag have shown, no country is immune from the growing menace in the region. The international community should demonstrate the necessary cohesion and solidarity to face and eliminate that challenge. In the absence of robust responses, the Gulf of Guinea pirates are consolidating and expanding their activities and using increasingly sophisticated methods.

Turkey believes that effective counter-piracy action must take into account the modus operandi of pirates, as well as the piracy profile and emerging trends. Effective responses should also be applied within the scope of the broader maritime security context, with particular attention to the evolving criminal networks. The external actors, donor agencies and relevant international organizations should engage with the States of the Gulf of Guinea in a coordinated way. Such an endeavour will require the involvement and support of existing regional schemes, as exemplified by the 2013 Yaoundé Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of Western African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, held again in Yaoundé in February 2016.

The lack of effective cooperation and coordination among maritime security bodies is the core issue in failing to counter piracy. The swift sharing of information among the littoral States about acts of piracy is of utmost importance. Moreover, the lack of hot-pursuit arrangements among some countries hampers the efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea. The littoral States should make necessary amendments in their domestic legislation with a view to punish the pirates arrested on the high seas.

The execution of various regional strategies already in place could be coordinated in a wider forum specific to the Gulf of Guinea, which would serve as an interface between regional actors and those members of the international community that are willing and capable to extend support to this cause. The countries of the region should receive assistance in building and enhancing the capacities of their national naval forces. Equipment support, training, intelligence-sharing and the establishment of new modalities for cooperation could be instrumental in that direction. In order to improve the capacity of coastal countries, a special trust fund could be established within the United Nations system through the contributions of concerned Governments and, if need be, of those private enterprises in the shipping and maritime transport sector whose business operations are directly damaged by those attacks.

Turkey is ready to explore all possible avenues of cooperation among the nations affected by that threat and to contribute, to the best of its ability, to the implementation of new strategies that could be devised in the period ahead.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cyprus.

Mr. Menelaou (Cyprus): Cyprus aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I will also make a statement in my national capacity.

At the outset, we wish to commend the Chinese presidency of the Security Council, as well as Angola and Senegal, for their initiative in organizing this open debate. We are also grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his briefing.

Cyprus is a maritime nation with a ship registry ranking tenth among international fleets. It is a major ship-management centre, representing 20 per cent of the world's third-party ship-management market. Hence, maritime security is vital to my country. Cyprus has been a member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) since 1973 and a member of its Council since 1987. We have always been a keen supporter of the IMO as the principal international regulatory body on matters of maritime security and safety. We have ratified all international conventions developed by the organization in that respect.

In the context of contributing to the call contained in the concept note before us (S/2016/321, annex) to share national experience and best practices, we wish to state that, at the national level, efforts against piracy and armed robbery are regulated by a particular law that includes West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. The law empowers the competent minister to regulate the passage of ships through risk areas. Furthermore, when a ship is in a risk area, the master of the ship and its operator are obliged to implement additional measures and use any means to ensure the security of the ship and its personnel.

However, self-protection measures applied by ships and their crews are limited in effect if not combined with regional and international cooperation in law enforcement and preventive measures. In that regard, the Yaoundé process needs to be firmly implemented and reinforced. Furthermore, a renewed United Nations focus on the issue of maritime crime in the region, possibly in the form of a new Security Council resolution, would be helpful in that regard.

In conclusion, let me say that Cyprus applauds and endorses all initiatives undertaken to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea in the context of the United Nations, and remains committed to enhanced cooperation and synergies at the international and regional levels, in particular through cooperation with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. Last but not least, we fully recognize the nexus between maritime security and the need to promote economic development, eliminate poverty and support regional coordination mechanisms logistically and financially to respond to the challenges we face. There can be no security, stability or peace without development, equality and justice in all respects.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Bosah (Nigeria): I thank the delegations of China, Angola and Senegal for organizing this debate on the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his briefing.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is having grave consequences for the economies of the countries of the subregion. It hampers maritime activity and threatens the stability and security of those States. It is therefore a major concern for countries around the Gulf of Guinea, including Nigeria.

We welcome today's adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, which is an indication of the Security Council's commitment to the restoration of safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria looks forward to the Council's continued engagement on this issue, in accordance with its mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Criminal gangs motivated by access to crude oil and those involved in the trafficking of illicit goods and small arms and light weapons are operating in the region. Their activities have led to an escalation in criminal acts, including armed attacks on ships in the Gulf of Guinea. The recent incidents of pirate attacks off the coast of Nigeria are an indication of the enormity of the challenge. There is an urgent need to help countries in the region to implement the integrated maritime security strategy. Governments in the region need to pursue sustained enforcement actions against piracy networks on land. We believe that the region also needs to increase its naval assets and maritime aviation to enable it to respond appropriately to maritime attacks.

At the subregional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has adopted the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy. The Strategy is in line with resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012), concerning acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. It ensures a holistic maritime policy framework for action and cooperation within West Africa. It also strengthens collaboration with other African regional bodies. We believe such initiatives complement the efforts of other regional organizations and the United Nations in tackling piracy.

An important step in the implementation of the ECOWAS Strategy was the inauguration of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre in March 2015 for a maritime zone known as Pilot Zone E. That demonstrates the commitment of ECOWAS member States to address the critical issue of maritime piracy, along with other illicit activities at sea. Pilot Zone E, which includes Nigeria, the Niger, Togo and Benin, lies mainly in the Gulf of Guinea and is considered to be one of the most dangerous maritime zones in West Africa. It is clear that robust protection measures are needed in that area.

Nigeria believes that strategies to combat piracy require adequate funding. Fighting piracy involves maritime domain awareness and the acquisition of surveillance equipment to ensure an effective response to incidents of piracy. In that regard, we reiterate our commitment to the 2013 Declaration of the Heads of State and Government of Central and West African States on Maritime Safety and Security in Their Common Maritime Domain, in which those Heads of State and Government committed to mutually collecting and sharing information among themselves, with regional coordination mechanisms and the support of strategic partners.

At the national level, the Nigerian Maritime and Safety Administration and Safety Agency and the Nigerian Navy have enhanced their operational collaboration. That has resulted in a substantial reduction in attacks around the Lagos harbour. The Agency and the Navy, backed by electronic surveillance assets, also conduct law-enforcement and anti-piracy patrols. Those efforts are helping to curtail piracy and other illegal activities in the Gulf of Guinea.

Nigeria stands ready to form strategic and lasting partnerships with international stakeholders to exchange information and technical know-how, mount surveillance and formulate interception techniques aimed at curbing piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. We call on the international community to accord the same level of priority given to the threat of piracy in the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean to the Gulf of Guinea, as it is of no less significance to the world in terms of commerce and strategic access.

We take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the assistance from the European Union, the International Maritime Organization, France, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and China and others too many to mention here. Their individual and collective efforts have been crucial to enhancing peace and security in the Gulf of Guinea.

The meeting rose at 1.55 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7676

Provisional

Security Council

Seventy-first year

7676th meeting

Monday, 25 April 2016, 1.55 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Wu Haitao	(China)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Malaysia	Ms. Razi
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Musikhin
	Senegal	Mr. Ndiaye
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rivas
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 1.55 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Council has before it the text of a statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank Council members for their valuable contributions to this statement. In accordance with the understanding reached among the members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the Security Council agree to the statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2016/5.

The meeting rose at 2 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7677

Security Council Provisional

Seventy-first year

7677th meeting

Tuesday, 26 April 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Liu Jieyi	(China)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Sambou
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2016/305)

Letter dated 13 April 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/342)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2016/305)

Letter dated 13 April 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/342)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/378, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2016/305, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic. I also wish to draw members' attention to document S/2016/342, which contains the text of a letter dated 13 April 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to a vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2281 (2016).

The meeting rose at 10.05 a.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7678

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7678th meeting

Tuesday, 26 April 2016, 10.05 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Liu Jieyi	(China)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Sambou
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on technical assistance provided to the African Union Commission and the Transitional Government of National Unity for the implementation of chapter V of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (S/2016/328)

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (S/2016/341)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

Accessible document

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on technical assistance provided to the African Union Commission and the Transitional Government of National Unity for the implementation of chapter V of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (S/2016/328)

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (S/2016/341)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/328, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on technical assistance provided to the African Union Commission and the Transitional Government of National Unity for the implementation of chapter V of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, as well as to document S/2016/341, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to present to the Security Council the report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (S/2106/341) and to provide an update on the most recent developments.

In general, the situation is very worrying, but we must note that, in the past 48 hours, there have been some positive developments, beginning with the return of Mr. Riek Machar to Juba. It is vital that the political and security trends currently under way in the country change quickly if we want to see the peace process have a real chance to succeed.

Following the arrival of the Chief of Staff of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A in Opposition) yesterday with 195 security personnel, Mr. Machar finally arrived in Juba today, at 8.45 a.m. New York time, with his team on a United Nations aircraft. He should be sworn in as First Vice-President in the course of today, maybe even as we speak. I do not have any real-time information on that point.

The return of the First Vice-President-designate should mark the beginning of a new chapter for the country and allow the real transition to begin. It is crucial that the parties take this opportunity to show their genuine determination to move forward with the peace process. We must pay tribute to the efforts of Mr. Festus Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC); Mr. Alpha Ouamar Konare, African Union High Representative for South Sudan; the regional and international partners; and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan, Ms. Ellen Løj. All their efforts helped to reach the compromises needed to get to this decisive stage in the peace process.

However, two additional steps will be crucial for beginning the transition: the establishment of the Transitional Government of National Unity and the full implementation of the transitional security arrangements. We hope that, as soon as Mr. Riek Machar is sworn in, the Government of National Unity could be quickly formed. The second phase, the return to Juba of security personnel of the opposition, will then be finalized and allow for the rapid operationalization of the Joint Operations Centre, which is responsible for coordinating the movements of security personnel in the capital and those of the Joint Integrated Police, together with the support of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and other international partners. Although the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) has checked the number of military personnel and weaponry available to Government forces at the six positions they are authorized to take in Juba, the CTSAMM has not been able to inspect the sites located 25 kilometres from the capital, nor has it been able to verify the SPLM military personnel and weapons that have been redeployed.

(*spoke in English*)

The security situation in South Sudan remains precarious, with intermittent fighting witnessed in several areas of the country. Of particular concern are the recent clashes between the SPLA and armed groups in Wau county, in Western Bahr el Ghazal, where it is mostly SPLA against a group of young people, all of which has led to killings and further displacement of civilians. Fighting between the SPLA and the opposition forces has also been reported over the past few weeks in Upper state Nile, Unity state and in the Equatorias.

Throughout the reporting period, as Council members have seen in the monthly notes I send to the Council, the Government has continued to impose restrictions on the movement of UNMISS and on that of humanitarian workers, in violation of the status of forces agrement. these restrictions — I am thinking in particular of those on night patrols in Juba — have severely impacted the ability of the Mission to move and to protect civilians, as well as the ability of the United Nations to deliver humanitarian assistance, which is, more than ever, badly needed. I would urge the Council to send a strong message to both the Government and the opposition that it is of the utmost importance that the Mission and the humanitarian partners be granted unimpeded freedom of movement so that they can fulfil their mandates.

Turning now to the violence and the protection-of-civilians side of UNMISS in Malakal on 17 and 18 February, the preliminary investigation confirmed that at least 25 internally displaced persons had been killed and over 140 injured. That was a very grave incident indeed. In view of that, the Secretariat convened an independent board of inquiry to look into the response of the Mission to the crisis. Also, the Secretary-General decided to establish a special investigation to look into all the factors that contributed to the violence and determine who was responsible. The special investigation will be led by Mr. Abiodun Bashua and is just about to start its work. The Council will be briefed on the outcome of both investigations within a month or thereabouts.

I have already mentioned that, unfortunately, the humanitarian situation continues to worsen. It is worsening in scale, in scope and in urgency. After almost two and a half years of conflict and economic decline, more than half of the South Sudanese population are now in need of humanitarian assistance. The so-called coping mechanisms of the people are exhausted and, for far too many, survival is a minute-to-minute challenge. Furthermore, the rainy season is about to start, and that will create even more risk, both of severe food insecurity and of disease. That is potentially deadly. I therefore think I should urge the Council to demand from the parties and from all armed actors that they immediately uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Human rights also remain of grave concern in the country because civilians continue to be systematically targeted on an ethnic basis, and their homes and livelihoods continue to be destroyed. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported, the scale of atrocities committed even after the signing of the Peace Agreement is unacceptable. We know that there has been no accountability for those who commit such egregious violations. Dissent is not tolerated. Free speech is penalized and, despite the Government's claim to the contrary, there is a real and deliberate environment of intimidation.

The Transitional Government, once it is set up, will have to start work from day one to address many issues, first and foremost the issues of governance, financial misappropriation and the rule of law. As we know, the current decrease in oil prices has pushed South Sudan to the brink of economic collapse, if not total collapse itself. Even if the parties fully implement the Peace Agreement, the economic challenges cannot be overcome without major reforms and significant international assistance.

We should not forget that there are other conflict drivers, such as the creation of the 28 new states. Those drivers should be addressed in accordance with the decision of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) summit and the position of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. Unilateral implementation of that presidential order would be detrimental to the peace efforts. It would also, by the way, require significant resources that South Sudan simply does not have. Governing 28 states is much more costly than governing just 10. I would urge the Security Council, in coordination with the African Union, to engage the President of South Sudan on this issue, with the aim of halting the implementation of the order until the issue has been discussed and mutually resolved within the Transitional Government.

Finally, the most vulnerable of the South Sudanese have suffered the most in the conflict, and they continue to do so. Without justice and reconciliation, the healing of those wounds — the fresher ones and the older ones alike — will not be possible, particularly if the issue of impunity is not addressed. There is a need for all parties to unite on this issue and agree on national reconciliation and transitional justice, including the establishment of the Hybrid Court, in accordance with the calendar. It also involves the rebuilding of the national justice system.

In sum, the peace process in South Sudan is extremely fragile. It will require a concerted and sustained effort at every level — national, regional and international. I can only call again on the Council to work closely with IGAD and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to mobilize all the support that is required for President Mogae, the Chairperson of the JMEC, and President Konaré, the African Union High Representative for South Sudan, to generate both the incentives and the disincentives so that the current dynamics on the ground can change. Without significant political leverage generated by concerted international and regional efforts, they will not succeed.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malok (South Sudan): Since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor to address the Council during your presidency, Sir, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Chinese delegation on its assumption of that responsibility for the month of April. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and to wish you every success in your leadership during the few days of your presidency that remain. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous for his briefing and the Council for allowing me to speak on an important subject for my country.

As we meet today, we fully recognize the urgent need there is for the parties to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to form a transitional Government of national unity. Despite the delay, of which everyone is aware, the Government of the Republic of South Sudan is firm in its commitment to fully implementing the Agreement. The swearing-in of Mr. Riek Machar as First Vice-President has opened a new chapter in that implementation. Mr. Machar's swearing-in today will be followed a day or two later by the formation of a transitional Government of national unity, after consultation with the various parties.

My Government hereby acknowledges the significant support we have received from the international community, particularly through its intervention in the conflict in South Sudan. We therefore call on the Security Council to remain seized of the situation with the parties as we come closer to taking the first step in implementing the peace agreement process.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my Government's full commitment to implementing the Agreement in its entirety.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.